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JASPER THORN

A Story of New York Life

BY

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TO THE
Reverend Francis P. Reilly,
EDITOR OF
"OUR YOUNG PEOPLE"
AND
FRIEND OF ALL KIND BOYS.

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JASPER THORN.

CHAPTER I.

BROADWAY.

JASPER THORN loved the noise of Broadway. He thought that it was the grandest street in the world. The pleasantest memories of his life were connected with that street. On the Fourth of July, when he had worn his first pair of trousers, his father had taken him down town to the post-office. There were many people in the City Hall Park, and, as Jasper passed through it holding his father's hand, he asked :

“Father, how did they hear of it?”

“Hear of what?” asked his father.

“How did they know that I was to wear my trousers to-day?”

The wearing of that first pair of trousers was the event of the day in Jasper's eyes. He did not believe that the procession or the fire-

works could be half so important as his new trousers.

There are days that stand out in a boy's memory. It is hard to say why they stand out so prominently. Jasper remembered, too, another day. He was playing in front of his father's house in Twenty-first Street. He had not yet been permitted to wear his breeches every day, and he had on a kilted green frock and a white shirt waist, and the rim of his cap was torn and his face and hands were not clean, for he had been playing marbles all the morning. But his father did not mind that. He came upon him suddenly, lifted him on his shoulder and carried him, just as he was, to the Sixth Avenue Elevated Railroad. And so father and son went to the photographer's on Broadway and had a picture taken,—Jasper with his torn cap, his uncombed hair and a patch on his frock. He remembered, too, his mother's protests when they reached home. But he was very grateful, after all, that the picture had been taken, with his closely cropped head and gray cap nestling against his father's shoulder.

And then there was a later day,—the day

on which his father took him to Broadway, in order to buy him a fishing-rod before their annual summer trip to Long Island. That fishing-rod made him feel "big," but not so "big" as when his father added the best of Rugby balls to the fishing-rod.

There were then memories. He recalled the day he had been saucy to his mother. It was at twilight in the evening, and his mother had refused him some more dessert. He had sulked and pouted, and said,—

"You never want me to have anything!"

Suddenly a firm hand had caught him by the collar and whirled him upstairs into the study. It was his father's, of course. Jasper remembered the subsequent proceedings, and how they hurt. He was not saucy to his mother after that.

He remembered Broadway on Sunday, too. It was so quiet and unlike itself. His grandfather had lived down near St. Peter's church on Barclay Street, and Jasper's father and mother liked to go there occasionally. And on some Sundays, they started early and walked down Broadway, to assist at Mass in St. Peter's.

He liked these Sundays ; the air was stiller, and the sunlight seemed to be different from the sunlight on other days. He walked beside his mother. There was one small detail that always occurred to him. His mother always held his hand, and in winter she wore kid gloves and in summer lace mittens. In after life, he could close his eyes and feel the smooth kid or the sharper lace in his hands. And then Broadway on a quiet winter morning or a quieter summer morning would rise before him.

Sometimes, when he grew older, he would loiter along Broadway on his way from school. He liked it particularly in the late afternoon. To stand in Union Square and to hear the rattle of the wagons, trucks and carriages—to see the flowerman laden with pond lilies in the summer and roses in the winter ; to hear the newsboys and the rattle of the elevated trains not so far off. Jasper loved all these sights and sounds just as much as a country boy loves the swimming-hole or the place where crabs grip or the clump of trees where the hickory nuts are thickest.

Time went by, Jasper made a trip each year to the sea ; he was not fourteen years of age ; he had made his First Communion ; he went to a private school, and was about to enter the College of St. Francis Xavier when his father went to Cuba, to examine a plantation near Matanzas which had been bequeathed to him by a relative. Mr. Thorn started one bright morning in the barque Hyperion. Jasper and his mother bade him good-bye on the wharf, for he was late, and the vessel was about to sail.

“ I will bring you a paroquet and lots of guava jelly ! ” he called out to Jasper. He threw a kiss at the two waiting ones ; the windlass creaked for the last time, and the Hyperion glided into the river. The sailors sang something about “ blowing a man down,” and Mr. Thorn hung over the bulwark for a last look at his dear ones. Soon the barque was mingled with a crowd of shipping. Then a great ocean steamer with a red and white steam pipe cut off their view of the ship, and Jasper and his mother felt that they were alone.

On the way home Jasper found Broadway less pleasant than usual. It was in the winter

time, and the air was biting and chill. He was too old now to hold tight to his mother's hand; he was almost as tall as she. And he felt very proud when, at the corner of Canal street and Broadway, he had to hold her arm as they crossed the street.

"Take care, mother," he said, "hold fast to me."

There was a smile on his mother's lips, and something like a tear in her eye as she turned to him.

"Why, Jasper," she said, in a surprised tone, "I believe that you are not a little boy any more."

Jasper's face flushed, and he felt almost as proud as on the Fourth of July when the drums had sounded and the flags moved and the fireworks gone off because he had worn his first pair of breeches!

The days went by slowly for the mother and son. They were very comfortable in the house in Twenty-first Street. There was plenty of money for everything. Jasper had an allowance which would have turned the heads of most boys. He was divided between his Latin

and Mathematics and the riding-school. He was very proud of his horse, Corsair, and every afternoon at five o'clock, he mounted and took his turns under the direction of the Belgian riding-master. A city boy has little exercise in winter. There is not even wood to saw. A bicycle cannot be used, foot-ball is out of the question with snow on the ground, base-ball, except indoors, is out of season ; there is no coasting or tobogganing, and it takes time to get to the park for skating. Let us hope that the builders of all new cities will leave large open spaces in every neighborhood for the boys. It would be a good thing for the boys and for the cities. Plenty of wholesome sport keeps boys out of mischief and helps to make useful citizens.

Jasper looked well on Corsair. Corsair was coal-black, with a long mane and tail, and a graceful movement. Jasper was as straight as an arrow, with bright blue eyes, tanned and healthy cheeks, and a well-shaped head covered with short yellow hair. His mother liked to go to the riding-school just to look at him. And on those great occasions when there were

musical rides, she sometimes put on her dark green habit and tall hat and rode around the ring with him. People liked to see the mother and son, and their acquaintances in the gallery waved their handkerchiefs as they passed by, to the tune of "Annie Laurie," played in quick time. "Annie Laurie" was the name of Mrs. Thorn's mare,—a gentle bay.

There were concerts, too, on some afternoons, in which Jasper was greatly interested. He had begun to play the violin, and his mother played his accompaniments with great patience. He had one favorite piece,—a galop from an old opera, called, "Ion." He generally lost a bar and forgot the time before he reached the end of it, but his mother never reproached him, though the screeches of that violin must have tried her patience sorely. The mother and son were much together. She tried to learn Latin, just to help him. But she found that he learned more and was more interested in teaching her. They walked whenever they had a chance; and they explored every part of the great city. Mrs. Thorn would never use a carriage if she could help it.

“Jasper,” she said, when he complained that he preferred to stroll on Broadway and to go nowhere else, “I do not care whether you know the geography of Africa or not ; —but you ought to know the geography of your own city, —and to see places with one’s own eyes is better than poring over maps.”

Jasper had only one boy friend ; he found his mother such good company that he did not seem to need anybody else. And she gave up “society” and omitted many a call, to be with her boy and share in his amusements.

Down on Bleeker Street, just on a corner, was an old house. It was tall, dingy, surrounded by groups of fruit stands, and flanked by business of all sorts. On one side was the Restaurant Rousseau ; above the restaurant a factory of artificial flowers ; below it was a Chinese laundry, —and everywhere there played children of all ages, unkempt and seemingly uncared for. But in this old house, —dingy as it was, dwelt one of the proudest old women in New York. Her name was Katharine Van Twiller Thorn, and she was Jasper’s aunt. Every day an old-fashioned carriage came, at

three o'clock, to her door, and she took a drive. Inside, her house was a model of comfort and luxury. She declined to move.

"I never look out the windows," she said, when people urged her to leave the house, "and I rather like noise. This house was good enough for my grandfather, Derrick Van Twiller, and it is good enough for me."

She did not approve of Jasper's mother. She called on her once a year, returning Mrs. Thorn's call. She disliked to think that Jasper Thorn should be a Catholic, and she never forgave Mrs. Thorn for having helped to bring her husband into the Church. She was immensely rich, but she often said that no money of hers should go to any Catholic—in case of her death. Nevertheless, she was fond of Jasper, and she had engaged a celebrated artist to paint him on Corsair. The picture, deep in a heavy gilded frame, hung over her dining-room fireplace. She delighted in his horsemanship in the riding-school more than in his progress in Latin.

"He gets his taste for study from his mother," she said. "We never cared for books on our

side of the house ;—but we were always fond of horses.”

Jasper had been taught to be kind and obedient, and, above all, reverent to the aged ; consequently his manners pleased his aunt. He spent every second Saturday with her. He sat at her right at dinner on these Saturday evenings in the large, dark dining-room. He looked very small in the high-ceiled apartment, with the tall candelabra in the center of the table towering above him and the great vases of flowers at either end. Aunt Katharine was fond of large ornaments, and she would not permit any light in her house, except that of candles. Sometimes, Mr. Harkins, Aunt Katharine’s man of business, dined with her ; but, as a rule, she and Jasper were by themselves.

The dinner was always served with great stateliness and no course, from the oysters to the fruit, omitted. Jasper felt tired, but he never said so. He sat as straight as he could ; but when his aunt permitted him to take a handful of macaroons and to leave the table, he was always very glad. There was only one

point in Jasper's manners, to which his aunt objected ;—he would make the sign of the cross. She, however, was too well-bred to speak of this, though it gave her great annoyance.

One Saturday evening as Jasper, was walking before his aunt up the narrow staircase from the dining-room, she said :

“What do you intend to do when you grow up, Jasper?”

They had reached the landing in front of the drawing-room door, and Aunt Katharine stood, rustling her stiff skirt and waiting for his reply.

“Oh, be a good man, like father,” said Jasper.

“That's very well,” said his aunt, as he opened the door for her, “but what are you going to do for a living?”

“Do?” said Jasper. “Oh! I never thought of that! Oh, just live ;—I suppose I shall be rich, like father ; he is rich.. I'll just help the poor. Aunt, I saw a woman as I came in, sitting on the curbstone, playing an organ with two babies in her lap——”

“How could she play an organ with two

babies?" asked Aunt Katharine, irritably. "Jasper, it is time that you chose some work in life. I will make you rich and successful, but you must come to live with me. You may be a millionaire, if you want to, and have a dozen horses like Corsair and all the base-ball and Rugby games and picture-books and canoes you want."

Jasper's eyes sparkled, and he listened attentively.

"You can have *anything* you want. You can give your mother as many jewels as you saw in my casket the other night."

Jasper raised his face inquiringly.

"You can have all I have, but you must live with me and go to my church. You can see your father and mother as often as you like."

CHAPTER II.

JASPER IS TEMPTED.

JASPER'S Aunt Katharine looked at him very keenly as she spoke these words.

"I am not sure that I know what you mean, Aunty," he said.

His aunt rang the bell before she answered. The butler came in.

"Give Master Jasper the candied pineapple," she said, "I know you like candied pineapple."

Jasper thanked her, and the man left the room.

"I am sorry to have given Jenks so much trouble," Jasper said, "I am much obliged to you, but I could have helped myself."

"You must never help yourself when my servants are here," said Aunt Katharine. "The other night you would insist on lighting the candles. You must not do that. You will spoil the servants. It was kind of Jenks to

bring the candied pineapple upstairs for you ; —he knows you like it.”

Jasper ate a piece of the pineapple and said nothing, until his aunt broke the silence.

“I am lonely, Jasper ; I have no child, and I think of giving up this big house and of going abroad. I want to take you with me. You shall see all the cities of the world,—and always have somebody like Jenks to wait on you.”

Jasper smiled a little to himself. He wanted to see all the cities of the world, of course, but he was not specially charmed with the prospect of being followed about by somebody like Jenks.

“I would pay him,” he said to himself, “to let me alone.”

“Your mother and father will be glad to see you well provided for. When I die you will be one of the richest men in New York. And while I live, you can go anywhere you please. You would like to see Paris.”

“And Rome,” said Jasper. “And the Pope, and the Colosseum where the Christian martyrs died. Did you ever read ‘Fabiola?’”

“No,” said his aunt, with a frown. “You

would see the Pope, of course. I saw Pius the Ninth myself. But Paris is more interesting than Rome."

"I don't understand how you can say so, Auntie," said Jasper. "Think of the martyrs. Did you ever hear the story of St. John at the Latin Gate. The Emperor Domitian——"

"I do not care anything about the Emperor Domitian," said Aunt Katharine. "Listen to me, child. I am offering you a splendid chance to get everything that boys and men care for."

"But, Auntie," said Jasper, "I don't care to be waited on. I like to do things for myself. I'd like to see Rome, but I don't think I'd care much for Paris. New York is good enough for me. Besides, how could I leave my father or mother? And, though I think your church is very respectable,—indeed, I think it must be a pretty good church or you wouldn't like it," Jasper said, politely, "I like my own best because it's the only true, holy, and apostolic church, you know."

"I don't know," said Aunt Katharine, irritably. "I know this, however, that every

poor wretch in New York,—every squalid Italian and foreigner of every kind belongs to your church.”

“Oh, I don’t mind that,” said Jasper, “if they’re good, they are God’s people. And when I was baptized, I became a child of Our Lord, and I am no better than they are. It isn’t always pleasant to sit next to some of them at the early Mass, but it doesn’t last long, and——”

“Jasper,” exclaimed Aunt Katharine, “I wish you would not interrupt me. You are too young to have opinions. The best people in New York belong to the Episcopal Church.”

“Where do you leave father and mother?” asked Jasper, laughing. They are the *best* people in New York.”

Aunt Katharine fanned herself so violently that she broke the sticks of her ostrich-feather fan.

“Oh, Auntie,” said Jasper, “just let us be friends as we are. I shall be your boy when I am not at home;—but when I am at home, I belong to father and mother,—particularly

mother," he added, with a little laugh, "*she* can't do without me."

His hands were somewhat sticky, for candied pineapple is not easy to handle ; but he did not mind that. He put his arms around his aunt's neck.

"Don't," she said, fretfully. "Do you think that I like to be sugared and made to feel like—like molasses? You annoy me, Jasper."

"Mother never says that," said Jasper, going back to his seat, somewhat disappointed.

"I don't care what your mother says," said Aunt Katharine. "I know that she ought to teach you better manners."

Jasper made no reply. He took his hands away and wiped them with his handkerchief.

"I won't do it again, Aunty,—I didn't think," he said, turning very red.

"Well," said Aunt Katharine, regretting her irritation, as she noticed the flush on the boy's face, "I am not used to the ways of boys. Now, Jasper, you will have to choose. You no doubt think that you have all you want now. You think that your father is rich. It is a mistake. There was a great fall in stocks

yesterday. Your mother does not know it yet, but by to-morrow she will understand that when your father comes home from Cuba, he will find himself to be so poor that he will have to sell everything to pay his debts. If your mother took an interest in business affairs, she would know it now. Your father will not be able to buy you the kind of clothes you have been in the habit of wearing, you will have to sell Corsair."

"Sell Corsair!"

Jasper stood up, with his lips slightly opened. "Sell Corsair!—I would never let anybody take Corsair, Aunt Katharine,—why, he is like a brother to me!"

"That will make no difference." Aunt Katharine watched the boy's face intently. She was determined that he should come under her influence. "He was not at all like his mother," she said to herself, "he belonged to the Thorn side of the family."

"I'll work and keep Corsair," Jasper said. "He has been like a brother to me ever since I was a little tot. Besides, Aunt Katharine, you who are so rich wouldn't let anybody else

have him. You'd let me keep him, wouldn't you ?”

Aunt Katharine was moved by the eagerness in the boy's face and voice ; but she answered coolly,—

“ If your father owed money, you would be dishonest to keep Corsair when his price would help to pay it.”

“ Would it be dishonest ?” asked Jasper. “ It seems hard. Why, Corsair would *die* if he left me. Oh, Aunt Katharine, you could buy him for me, couldn't you ? I'm not thinking so much of myself,” said Jasper, gulping down a sob, “ as for Corsair. He would never be the same again.”

“ It seems to me that you think a great deal more of Corsair than you do of your father and mother,” said Aunt Katharine, dryly. “ When they realize how poor they are, they will be very unhappy. You can't think of going to college now. And you'll perhaps have to live in a stuffy, hot tenement house somewhere. Of course, if you came to me, I should help them. I would see that your mother did not suffer.”

"Would you?" asked Jasper, opening his lips slightly, as he always did when he was interested.

"Do you want some more candied pineapple?" his aunt asked abruptly. "I will ring for Jenks."

"Oh, don't mind," said Jasper, with a show of cheerfulness, "I'm a poor boy now, and people ought not to wait on me. I'll just take a slice myself. Thank you, Aunt Katharine."

Aunt Katharine turned away her face; she was tempted to smile, as Jasper took his chair again, supplied with a large piece of pineapple.

"Your mother must suffer, too, Jasper," she added, regaining her severity. "She has always been accustomed to the best of everything. Think of her living in nasty, little rooms, with no servant——"

"Oh, I could do the work. I'd like it," said Jasper. "I think we'd be quite cozy,—we three;—and you, of course, would come to see us and bring us things sometimes;" he added, "you know just what mother likes. It would be a great pleasure to you, Aunt Katharine!"

"The boy's an idiot, like his mother," said

Aunt Katharine, in a low voice; and the words did not reach Jasper.

"Your father will not be in a condition to give your mother the luxuries she has been accustomed to. I pay attention to all matters of business and I know what I am talking about. Now, you can secure all these things to her by coming with me. She will have to live in close, stuffy rooms, you will have to sell Corsair, and, in a word, you will be poor. I am alone, Jasper, I am very fond of you. But I want you all to myself. I must make a man of you."

"Aunt Katharine," said Jasper, looking at her in a rather troubled way, "why can't you help us without wanting me to leave mother and father?"

"I can," said his aunt, "but I have not the slightest intention of doing so. On one side, you have poverty for your portion; on the other riches. By choosing to come with me, you will save your mother and father from a thousand trials."

"But, Aunt Katharine," said Jasper, tears gathering in his eyes, "I am sure that my

father and mother would never give me up. They would rather be poor and have me than be rich and be without me."

"Perhaps so," answered Aunt Katharine, coldly. "Perhaps they will be selfish enough to have you lose all the advantages I can give you. I cannot answer for them. But, if you want to come to me, there will be no difficulty."

"Will mother really suffer so much?" Jasper asked. "Is it so dreadful to be poor?"

"You have only to look around you, as you go home. You will see how the poor suffer all around you. Your mother will suffer more than other people, because she has never been poor."

Jasper's face grew paler ; he leaned his cheek on his hand.

"I will never give up my religion, Aunt Katharine."

"We will see about that later," said Aunt Katharine, with a smile. "I am sure that you will find it very hard to give up Corsair."

Aunt Katharine rang the bell for more coffee, some of which Jasper was expected to drink from a tiny gilded cup.

While Jenks handed the cups, there was silence. When he had left the room, Jasper spoke out resolutely,—

“I will work for mother!”

“Aunt Katharine laughed out aloud, though she secretly admired the boy’s spirit.

“What will you do?”

“Anything!” answered Jasper, bravely.

“That means nothing,” she answered, coldly.

“The boy that thinks he can do *anything*, finds that he can do nothing.”

“I can take care of horses,” said Jasper. “I have always helped with Corsair.”

“You will make a pretty stable boy. I suppose you have acquired these low tastes from your mother,” said Aunt Katharine, forgetting herself.

Jasper set down his cup,—his face turning red.

“I must go, Aunt Katharine,” he said, standing up. “My mother is the *best* woman in this world, and I’d rather live in a log-cabin with her than in a palace with anybody else. There! You don’t know her. Even, if she was not my mother, I am sure I should love

her, all the same. She can't help being good, —and, Aunt Katharine, she always says such nice things of you. Suppose I should tell her what you have just said ; she would be so surprised and hurt."

"I don't know about that," said Aunt Katharine, grimly, "but I know you will not tell, because you are a gentleman."

"I must go," Jasper said. "I know you are cross, Aunt Katharine, and I am sure you don't mean what you say when you're cross. We're all that way when we are cross."

"Well, you may go," said Aunt Katharine, rustling her stiff silk. "But remember, Jasper, you must choose between me and poverty for your parents and yourself."

Jasper went up to his aunt and as usual kissed her on the cheek. Nothing more was said. Jenks announced that the carriage was ready, and Jasper drove home. The days had begun to lengthen. Jasper looked from the carriage window at the groups of people on the steps of houses. Children in dingy garments played games on the sidewalk. Jasper could hear girls' voices singing "Gravel, Green

Gravel" and "London Bridge." The carriage stopped for a moment to let a truck pass. A man, drunk and ragged, passed close to the window, with a little girl clinging to his coat. Jasper's heart melted at the sight of the white, pinched face of the child. There was a fight going on somewhere; he heard fearful oaths. His heart stood still, as he thought of his mother. Must she live in such a place,—see such sights?—and hear such words?

His Aunt Katharine had told him that he could save her from this? But, after all, he thought, Our Lord was poor, and He was the most perfect. Again the sound of oaths and screams came to his ears. What a relief it was when the carriage wheels went smoothly into Madison Avenue! Jasper looked at the houses with flowers in their windows and balconies,—one was brightly lit. Ladies in gay wraps were ascending the steps. How nice it was to be rich! Jasper thought.

To his surprise, his mother was waiting for him in the vestibule.

"Jasper," she said, in a choking voice, "I have bad news for you."

“Oh, mother,” he said, “it is not so bad. We can stay together, even if we are poor.”

“Poor !” said his mother, with a gesture of disdain. “Poverty would be nothing to this. Your father is dead !”

She dropped a yellow telegraphic slip into Jasper’s hands, and, leaning against the wall, hid her face, while he tried to read it.

CHAPTER III.

AUNT KATHARINE.

THE worst had come to pass. Jasper soon knew the truth. His father had been swept overboard from the deck of the *Hyperion* on the barque's homeward voyage; and he and his mother must now face the world.

Aunt Katharine had come to call, and had said a few words of sympathy; she had no doubt suffered; for Jasper's father was dear to her, but she had not shown it.

It soon became plain that what she had said was true,—Mr. Thorn had suddenly become poor. Worse than that, he was in debt.

Mrs. Thorn did not think of the change in her fortune;—her husband was dead. That was enough, her grief seemed too great for her to bear.

Jasper felt as if the world had suddenly become dark. On the following night, while

his mother slept for the first time since his father's death, he went down to the stable and mounted Corsair. The horse neighed his usual welcome as he felt the boy's hand in his mane. Jasper put his head against the horse's neck and began to cry. Corsair seemed to be his only friend on earth, except his mother. The horse stood neighing softly after each sob that burst from Jasper. Corsair somehow or other seemed to give him comfort. After a time he went to sleep with his arms about Corsair's neck. In the morning, the stable-boy found him. But he had not fallen asleep until grave thoughts had passed through his mind.

Father Frietag had patted him on the head and said,—“You must try, with God's help, to be a man!”

And Jasper asked himself how he was to be a man. Would it be more manly to give up his mother and go with Aunt Katharine or to leave her? His heart bounded as he thought how delightful it would be to keep Corsair. But would it be manly to enjoy all luxuries with Aunt Katharine and to leave his mother

alone? What would she care for a fine house and a carriage and servants, if her boy were not with her?

Ten days passed; and then the lawyers came to tell Mrs. Thorn that she was penniless and that she must leave her pretty house. She could not realize this at first.

"Oh, Jasper," she said, "how dreadful it is! What a change it will make for you! I am afraid you will have to give up so many things!"

"They can't take Corsair, can they?" asked Jasper, anxiously.

"No,—Corsair is your own. But you will have to give up all idea of going to college."

"I will just do the best I can," said Jasper, bravely.

"Perhaps Aunt Katharine may help us!" said his mother, hopefully.

"She will," Jasper said, gravely, "on one condition."

Then he told his mother what Aunt Katharine had said. The mother and son were together in Jasper's room. As he went on with his story, his mother clasped his hand tightly,

looking at the picture of the Mother and Child above the chimney-piece.

“And do you want to go, Jasper?” she said. “You may choose,—that is, if she will not oblige you to turn away from your religion. She can give you everything,—I, nothing! Yes, Jasper, you may go, if you choose, for, in after life, when you learn what you have missed, you may reproach me! I can bear it! —I am sure I can bear it!”

The undertone of agony in his mother’s voice went to Jasper’s heart.

“Mother,” he said, “could you live in a poor, little room, in a bad neighborhood, with no servants? Oh,—a horrible place, like the streets we pass through on the way to Aunt Katharine’s?”

“Yes,” said the mother, “if you——” she stopped short; she would not influence him.

“You mean that if I were with you?”

Mrs. Thorn did not answer; she clasped Jasper’s hand more tightly.

“Mother,” he said, “do you want me to go? Do you?”

His mother raised her eyes to the lovely pict-

ure,—the Sistine Madonna, which you all know so well,—and then put her arms around her boy.

“I am too big to sit on your lap now,” he said, trying to laugh.

“It is such a short time since you were so little. I remember you toddling about in your little blue gown, and your father——” she could not speak; Jasper felt that she was trembling.

“My dear child,” she went on after a pause, “for your sake I can endure to part with you. We are ruined, Jasper,—absolutely ruined. To do anything well, you must be educated. How can I afford to educate you? If Aunt Katharine takes you, you will be made a *man* of, as she says. The only thing to be afraid of, is that you should lose your religion.”

“Never,” said Jasper.

“If Aunt Katharine will promise not to interfere with your religion, I shall let you go.”

Mrs. Thorn’s voice sank very low,—almost to a whisper, and involuntarily she put her hand to her heart.

“Yes, Jasper, I shall let you go. It will be hard; it seems to me cruel that she should

exact such a separation. But she knows me, and she knows that I would not be so selfish as to sacrifice your future to my own feelings. Jasper, we shall have to make up our minds to it."

"And what will you do?"

Mrs. Thorn looked again at the picture, and her lips moved as if in prayer.

"I will try to do without you."

"But I can't do without you, mother," said Jasper, his voice breaking.

"It will be best. When you have learned everything, you know, and begin to make your way in the world, we can make our home together, and be happy."

"But the long years between! Oh, mother," cried Jasper, his eyes filling with tears.

"You will have Corsair," said his mother, turning her face away. He said nothing.

"And toys, books, travel,—even your favorite pineapple candy."

"Oh, mother!" he said, reproachfully. "Oh, dear mother!"

"You will see Venice and Paris and Rome—and porpoises will swim around your ship and

there will be beautiful nights at sea when you will think of your mother."

"And you," Jasper said, "will sit in the pretty rooms Aunt Katharine will give you and sometimes think of me. But, oh, mother, I can't go."

"Not even to keep Corsair."

"I will work to earn money to keep Corsair !"

His mother smiled. "Boys' work brings little money. Oh, Jasper, Jasper, if God had not taken your father !—but His will be done !"

Jasper looked about his room. His mother and he were seated upon the little white bed. The walls were covered with pink paper, with blue morning glories climbing over them. There on his desk was his box of stamps, here over a small table was his geological cabinet. Near the head of his bed was his library, with "Robinson Crusoe," "The Catholic Crusoe," "Midshipman Bob," and "The Young Marooners," on the lower shelf. Beside his revolving chair were his Indian clubs. And, in the wide window-seat, was a nest of soft

cushions, — just the place for a comfortable “read.” Must he give all these things up? The breeze lifted the white curtains, and he thought of the poor rooms he had caught glimpses of, as he rode on the elevated cars; — it would be hard for him to change all this for one of them, but much harder for his mother. After all, a boy ought to be able to endure anything; but his mother, — his sweet, gentle mother must have dainty things.

A knock was heard. It was Matilda’s knock, — Matilda was Mrs. Thorn’s maid; she had been Jasper’s nurse. She entered with a white envelope in her hand, her eyes were red and swollen.

“Oh, Mrs. Thorn!” she said. “Oh, they’ve been telling me awful things, ma’am, — horrible things! They say you are a poor woman, ma’am.”

The tears began to run down Matilda’s wrinkled cheeks; they fell upon the envelope, and she hastily wiped them against her frock.

“Matilda,” said Mrs. Thorn, cheerfully, “it is true; — but the poor are not always unhappy.”

"Sure, you've never been used to it ! It would be different with me,—many a struggle I've had,—God knows !—with poverty." Matilda put her hand into the pocket of her black dress, and brought out a thin book.

"There's five hundred dollars there, ma'am, it's the savings of five years, and it's all yours !"

She laid the book on the bed, and a look of satisfaction overspread her face.

"It's my saving bank's book ;—and you can go down to Chambers Street and get the money, ma'am, whenever you've a mind to do it."

Mrs. Thorn did not touch the book ; she took Matilda's rough hand in her soft clasp.

"I cannot take it, Matilda," she said. "You will need the money yourself. In a few days I shall be compelled to part with you."

"I will not go !" said Matilda, firmly. "Sure, what would Master Jasper do when his shoe-strings are knotted or he breaks his buttons off ? Why, he'll always be my baby !"

Jasper could not help laughing, in spite of his grief and perplexity.

"It will be very hard to part, but I shall not be able to pay you."

"But, if Aunt Katharine takes me," said Jasper, in an uncertain voice, "you will have plenty of money, mother."

"I would not be dependent on Aunt Katharine, Jasper," his mother answered seriously. "I will try to earn my living in some way."

"If Aunt Katharine is not going to take care of you, why should I give you up?" demanded Jasper.

"Because Aunt Katharine will take care of *you*," said his mother.

Matilda stood twisting her apron and looking from one to the other.

"Faith, you're not talking of leaving each other!" she exclaimed. "Why, Jasper, your mother will never live without you. Is it earning her own living she's talking about? The likes of her, indeed, thinking of such a thing, and me in good health, barring the rheumatism!"

Mrs. Thorn smiled, and opened the note Matilda gave her.

"It's from Aunt Katharine,—only a few words. 'I will make every provision for Jasper and yourself, if you will send him to me. I

shall sail for Liverpool on Saturday. If you do not accept my terms, you may have the three top rooms of my house in Bleecker Street, rent free as long as you like. It will be in future a tenement house. It is all I can do. You will please decide at once.' She writes from the Waldorf,—she must have moved already ! She gives me such little time ! Oh, Jasper, how can I ?—how can I ?”

“You can't !” said Matilda. “What is riches without a mother ?”

“Mother,” said Jasper, firmly, “I'll stay with you ; we can both earn our living. I will be a great man, in spite of Aunt Katharine. Why, Abraham Lincoln had no paper to write the alphabet on when he began to learn his letters, and he was a big boy then. And do you remember how hard his mother had to work to get him even a coon-skin cap ? Besides, mother, I might lose my faith away from you. We'll stay together,—and God will take care of us !”

Matilda put her apron to her eyes, and Jasper felt his mother's tears fall upon his face.

CHAPTER IV.

MONKEY AND CELIA.

MRS. THORN had a number of friends and a great many acquaintances ; they left cards at her house ; but after she went to Bleecker Street, they soon lost sight of her. They felt that it was impossible for them to take their carriages into such a place since Aunt Katharine had gone away.

She was not altogether penniless ; she had three hundred dollars, and Jasper had five hundred to his own credit in the Bank. Corsair had been sold by Mrs. Thorn's lawyer, and Jasper had received this sum for the horse.

The sale of Corsair was the hardest of the new trials. It had seemed to the boy that he could not suffer at all after his father's death ; but he found that he could. He tried not to show his grief ; but his mother heard him sobbing at night, and, later, going to his room

“ But found him slumbering deep
With darkened eyelids and his lashes yet
From his late sobbing wet.”

It was hard for her to know that his grief was so great, but she knew that he would overcome it in his manly way.

Mrs. Thorn had no choice but to accept Aunt Katharine's offer of the rooms. And this delighted Aunt Katharine,—

“ She will soon get tired of the horrible squalor and noise. I could protect myself, having the whole house to myself. She cannot. I'll have Jasper yet.”

The three rooms seemed very small to Mrs. Thorn and Jasper. Matilda remained with them for a week, and they were neatly furnished with such things as the creditors permitted Mrs. Thorn to keep. When the red curtains were closed and the grate fire lit,—fortunately, Aunt Katharine had a grate in every room for ventilation,—and the little table, with its white cloth and shining napkins displayed, Matilda ceased to sigh over the downfall of her mistress.

“ It's bad,” she said, “ but it might be worse.”

On the first evening, she brought in a long-stemmed rose and put it in a thin glass on the table. This was all Mrs. Thorn would let her do.

"No delicacies," she said, as Matilda hinted at pineapple for the "poor, dear child." "We are poor, and we must live as the poor live."

Matilda found a place on Sixteenth Street, not too far from her "lambs," as she called Jasper and his mother. At first the big house was silent, and Jasper and his mother rather enjoyed being alone. It was great fun for both of them to do their slender marketing on their way from Mass in the morning. Matilda always contrived that there should be a flower on the table. Excepting Father Freitag, she was the only person who came to see them.

Jasper had a secret sorrow. He had one close friend, Ben Moran. They were of the same age. They had played together; they had made their first Communion together; they had been inseparable at school. But Ben seemed to have forgotten Jasper.

"Oh, mother," Jasper said, very often, feeling lonely at heart, "if I had not you, I should die."

The mother and son talked over many of their old plans ; they must give them up now.

“I was so anxious to begin a library for some of the poor children about us,” said his mother.

“One can do so much good when one is rich,—almost nothing when one is poor ! There is so much misery near us. All we can do is to keep out of sight of it.”

“I don’t know about that, mother,” said Jasper, who always grew hopeful when his mother became despondent. “You and I have had more advantages than these people about us. Perhaps we can help them a little.”

“No,” said Mrs. Thorn, “poverty makes people selfish. They have all they can do to help themselves.”

“And so does riches,” began Jasper. “I’m sure,—” he stopped, with quivering lip. He was too proud to say that, if he were in Ben Moran’s place, he would not have acted so.

Mrs. Thorn entered Jasper at the best parochial school she could find within walking distance of her house. As the days went by, the house filled with tenants. And, as the spring advanced, and every window and door was open,

the noise of rude voices was almost unendurable. Aunt Katharine's well-kept house grew dingy and squalid just like its neighbors. Mrs. Thorn tried not to pass through the hallways after the early hours of the morning. And Jasper was shocked by the sights and sounds.

The dining-room floor was occupied by a Chinese laundryman and a colony of Neapolitan fruit-sellers; the drawing-room was divided into half-a-dozen small apartments, filled by some French people and several German families. The French people kept the restaurant on the second floor, where the large reception room had been. The upper stories,—the house contained five,—were occupied by ten families of different nationalities. Some of these, Jasper knew, were Polish Jews, for he noticed that they did not work on Saturday, that the oldest of the women, who was a widow, had shaved her hair from her head, and that they were constantly carrying strings of dried mushrooms and live geese to their rooms.

As the nights grew hotter, the population of the house surged out on to the sidewalk.

Jasper had never seen so many little children together in his life. They toddled under everybody's feet, they screamed and yelled, and smeared themselves with the pulp of the half-rotten bananas of which there always seemed to be a large supply.

Grief-stricken and unhappy as she was, Mrs. Thorn tried to appear cheerful. Jasper took his luncheon to school,—his mother was glad of the excuse to keep him away from the house. At night when he returned, he found his mother awaiting him with a smile and a kiss. The silver candlesticks, with their bright red shades, cast rosy reflections on the shining cloth, and there was always something nice for dinner made by his mother's own hands. On one particular evening, it was a dainty meat pie laid in a bed of parsley, and a cranberry tart,—just enough for two.

They could not keep out the hideous oaths and screams, or the clatter in the hall-ways below ; but they tried to forget them.

“Oh, Jasper,” his mother suddenly said, as a frightful oath came loudly from a man's lips, “we must leave this place.”

Jasper dropped his fork and put his fingers in his ears.

“There, mother ! Do this !” he said. When the din of fighting had ceased below, he resumed his dinner. “Let us think of the lilacs Matida has sent us.”

“No, Jasper, we must go somewhere,” said his mother.

“Where ?” asked Jasper. “You know we can’t afford to pay rent. As it is,” he said, timidly, “I must quit school and go to work.”

“Why ?” asked his mother. “Oh, Jasper, you can’t leave school.”

“But I must. I shall have to do as other poor boys do. I’m no better than Abraham Lincoln was, am I ? And there is your favorite St. Francis de Assisi, look how poor he was ! Mother, we can’t live on our money this way ; —we’ll soon have none ;—and then !”

Mrs. Thorn knew this, it had been secretly troubling her.. But she disliked to think of the subject. Jasper had brought her face to face with it.

“Oh, Jasper ! How can I bear it ! What would your father say, if he were here. He

always wanted, above all things, that you should be well educated."

"He is in Heaven," said Jasper, "and he wants me to do the right thing. The right thing is for me to go to work. I must find something to do on Monday. The world's a big place, and it seems to me that New York is a big slice of the world. It will be a hard thing, if I can't find a place in it. If you get sick, mother, I'll have to ask Aunt Katharine to help us,—so don't get sick. That's all I'm afraid of!"

Before Mrs. Thorn could answer, there was heard a sound of scuffling and whispering at the back window. Suddenly the curtains parted and a small boy fell in, protesting loudly.

Mrs. Thorn and Jasper started up in surprise. The small boy, who wore a blue shirt, ragged trousers, and a battered straw hat too big for his shaved head, looked frightened. He had large dark eyes and a brown skin.

"She pushed me!" he said, looking up at Mrs. Thorn.

"I didn't, Monkey," cried a shrill voice from behind the curtain. "You just fell in."

"She—a pushed me!" said the little boy again, looking up defiantly at Mrs. Thorn.

"It's not true, Monkey Angliori!" exclaimed the shrill voice. "You climbed up the fire-escape and fell in yourself. You're always blamin' somebody for something!"

The curtains parted and showed a thin, freckled little girl in a rusty black dress, with a dingy blue bow pinned on top of her tangled hair. She entered the room from the little iron balcony of the fire-escape, without the slightest bashfulness.

"Oh, my!" she said sniffing at the odor of the pastry, "it's just like a parlor in here. I wanted to see what you had so bad;—so I just climbed up the fire-escape ladder and that Monkey followed me,—he's such a nasty, interferin' kid!—and, of course he had to fall in! He'd fall over his own shadow, he would. He's the clumsiest dago I ever saw!"

Jasper began to smile. The child seemed so funny and so independent, that his mother had to smile, too.

"Well, come in, little boy and little girl," said Mrs. Thorn, "we are just having our dinner."

"You're late," said the girl, decidedly. "When we have dinner, we always have it at twelve sharp. You must beswells! Are they *real* silver candlesticks?" she demanded, catching sight of the table. "Why, you must be rich. The tenants all call you 'the lady'."

Jasper gave a stool to Monkey Angliori, who kept his rather dingy finger in his mouth, as if ashamed of himself; and then offered the little girl a chair.

"Well, I don't mind if I do," she said, settling down into it. "Say, these are the prettiest rooms I ever saw!"

Mrs. Thorn smiled, and, in spite of herself, even this little street Arab's admiration pleased her.

"Is this little boy your brother?" she asked.

"Him?" asked the little girl with scorn in her keen blue eyes. "*Him?* Why, he's only a dago. The idea of Monkey Angliori being my brother. Why, my name's Celia McGonigle and I keep house for my father on the third floor. Monkey's got no parents, and I don't like him to 'sociate with the Chinese, so I just took him to live with our kids. You

can't do much with Monkey, though," she said, giving his straw hat a rather severe push that caused it to fall off his head and hang suspended by one of his large brown ears. "You can't make him look nice. He's only a dago after all."

Nevertheless, Celia tried to pull Monkey's shirt together at the neck in a very motherly fashion.

Mrs. Thorn, seeing that Jasper was amused, offered the two visitors the rest of the cranberry tart, which they accepted.

"I thank much the beautiful lady," said Monkey, in his Neapolitan dialect.

"Don't talk gibberish," said Celia, "talk United States. I declare, Monkey, there's no use trying to teach you anything. Why, only yesterday——"

There was a wild shriek from below, followed by another and another. Mrs. Thorn started and turned pale.

"I guess somebody is trying to murder Bill White again," said Celia, calmly eating her tart. "This *is* good ;—I hope my pop isn't in the row."

CHAPTER V.

A LESSON.

JASPER and his mother were astonished by the cool manner of the little girl. The shrieks and oaths continued in the street.

“Did you say that your father might be in the fight?” asked Mrs. Thorn.

“Oh, yes,” said Celia, “he is often in fights. I have a hard time with him,—mom is dead, you know. There are three of us and Monkey. We get along somehow. Oh, I wish we lived in a little parlor like this!”

“Are you not afraid that your father may be hurt?” asked Mrs. Thorn.

The little girl raised her bright eyes to the questioner’s and said,—

“Serves him right! If he gets a good knock in the head, he will keep quiet.”

“Oh, Celia,” exclaimed Mrs. Thorn in hor-

ror. "Oh, little girl, how can you speak so of your father?"

"Why not?" asked Celia. "He licks Monkey and me and the kids,—doesn't he, Monkey?"

Monkey drew his fingers from his mouth, shook his head solemnly, and said,—

"He lick—a me!"

The noise in the street had subsided. Jasper, at the front window, reported that a policeman had taken a man off.

"Is it pop?—is it pop?" Celia asked, making her way to the front of the house and stretching her neck from the window. "No, it is only Jake Bloogan. Dear me, lady, how soft your carpet is! Come, try the carpet in this room, Monkey!"

Monkey went slowly through the rooms, his little brown, bare feet sinking into the thick rugs which Mrs. Thorn had brought from her former home.

Jasper was shocked at the familiarity of these street children; his mother was amused. She offered them two pieces of the cranberry tart.

Monkey smiled sweetly, showing his white teeth, which were at once buried in the red berries.

“Haven’t you any manners?” asked Celia.
“Why, don’t you wait till the lady gives you a knife?”

But Monkey could only grin; his piece was gone.

Mrs. Thorn gave Celia a fork and napkin. The little girl sat down on the stool and fingered both. She frowned at Monkey; she fidgeted with the stool; she blushed; but, though she held the fork in her left hand, she did not touch the tart.

“May I have another piece of tart, mother?” Jasper asked.

“Certainly,” his mother said, wondering what Celia’s hesitation meant.

Jasper took a piece on his plate, adjusted the napkin on his lap, and began to eat the tart with his fork. Celia’s face brightened. She imitated him exactly.

Mrs. Thorn gave Jasper an approving glance. His thoughtfulness pleased her. She forgot for a moment the heaviness of heart

occasioned by the sounds of strife below. She said to herself that Jasper's delicacy of nature could not,—with God's help,—be affected by these rude surroundings.

Celia ate the tart slowly and with as much care as if the eyes of the world were upon her. To Mrs. Thorn, she was like a child out of another world. Her thin calico dress, her tangled hair, her old expression of shrewdness surprised Jasper's mother, who had little experience among the children of very poor people.

Jasper turned his attention to the little boy.

"What's your real name?" he asked.

"Mon-kee," said the boy with his sweet smile.

"But you must have another name," said Mrs. Thorn.

"He has," said Celia, "but he hasn't gump-tion enough to know it; besides, it is his Sunday name,—I only call him by it when his face is clean and I get him ready for church."

"So you take him to church?" asked Mrs. Thorn, interested.

"I ain't no Pagan, Mrs. What's-your-name," answered Celia, promptly. "He's only a dago, but he has a soul to save, I want you to know that. Some people look on dagos as if they were dirt beneath their feet. I ain't built that way,—and I want you to know it!"

Mrs. Thorn's face flushed slightly; she was shocked by the slang and the pertness of the little girl, and so was Jasper.

"But what is his name?" she asked.

"On Sundays," said Celia, "we call him Pasquale Angliori, on other days, he's just Monkey."

Pasquale grinned, and said,—

"*Si,—si—Pasqual' Angliori—on the Sunday and the festa. To-day,—only Mon-kee!*"

Jasper laughed, and Mrs. Thorn could not help smiling at the quaintness of the boy.

"Don't you know that you ought not to come into our house so unceremoniously?" asked Mrs. Thorn.

"So what?" demanded Celia.

"Mother means to say that it is not proper to visit people you don't know by means of the fire-escape," said Jasper.

“Oh,—that was Monkey’s fault!” said Celia. “He would climb up,—he is just like a monkey;—and then I wanted to see what you had in here. I never saw anything so pretty! Candles are nicer than gas, though they don’t give so much light. It wouldn’t do to put flowers on our table,—the kids would pull them off, though pop might like it. He likes pretty things. But there’s no use,” said Celia, breaking off and frowning, “there is no use in *trying*. So long as pop drinks, we’ll never be any better. Sometimes I think I’ll just give up and let the kids and Monkey just go to the bad.”

“Oh, no!” exclaimed Mrs. Thorn, “do not say that!”

Celia moved from the stool to another chair and began to rock to and fro. Mrs. Thorn was startled by the expression of seriousness that came over her face. The interest in Mrs. Thorn’s voice had brought this out. Celia had so far in her life met with little sympathy. The shrewd look left her face, though the wrinkles in her forehead grew deeper.

“You don’t know how hard it is, lady,”

she said. "I had a good mother. She slaved and slaved, and pop took to drink after she died. She said, 'Celia, help the boys.' George and Nick and Will are the boys,—Will's three years of age. Well, I've done *my* best. But it is awful hard. And when Monkey's father and mother died, I just took him in. I must say some of the eye-talians are good to him and give him things,—but his relations are all men and dagos,—and you know what they are, though all of them are not so bad."

"No, no, some of the Italians are very good, and I am sure they appreciate your kindness to little Pasquale," said Mrs. Thorn.

"But it is hard. There's the washing. And I have to coax pop to give me money when he is working. George and Nick sell papers, and sometimes Monkey and me 'tend Joe Tigliapetra's fruit-stand at night, when he is away. It's hard, all the same. And sometimes I think I'll just give up and let the boys and Monkey go to the bad."

Mrs. Thorn was intensely interested.

"I wish I could help you!" she said. "You must let me!"

Celia did not seem to understand. She was unused to sympathy.

"But when I go to church and find it so quiet there, I feel better. And then sometimes Father Gray says, 'That's a good little girl,' when I go to Communion. If it wasn't for church, I'd just let 'em all go to the bad!"

In the meantime, Monkey had helped himself to a lump of sugar from the bowl. Celia pounced on him and slapped his fingers.

Jasper was dazzled by the quickness of Celia's movements, and astonished that Pasquale took his punishment so quietly.

"You must ask for sugar, if you want it, Pasquale," Mrs. Thorn said. "Good children do not take what they want without asking for it."

"Pasqual' my Sunday name," answered Monkey, putting his slapped fingers into his mouth. "Next time I want a sugar, I ask for it. Give me sugar!" he added, with a grin.

Jasper gave him a lump of sugar, which he took, thanking Jasper in Italian.

Celia watched the proceeding.

"You folks are different from anybody I know. What do you do?"

"I go to school," said Jasper.

"And I just take care of my boy here," said Mrs. Thorn.

"Don't you work at anything?" asked Celia. "Doesn't your boy sell papers or bananas?"

Jasper laughed. It seemed so funny to think of his selling papers or bananas.

"I go to school," he repeated.

"You must be rich," said Celia. "I wish I were rich,—I'd have a silver sugar-bowl like yours and curtains on the windows and put clean collars on the boys every day. It must be nice to be rich."

"It is," said Mrs. Thorn, "but we are not rich."

"And your boy doesn't sell papers?"

"No."

"That's queer," said Celia. "I don't understand it."

Mrs. Thorn did not reply; she was thinking; Celia's words had made her think. A bill for the painting of the old house had come in that

day, and another for various articles which she had ordered thoughtlessly, before her husband's death, would soon be presented. Her money was beginning to go. The little girl's words had made Jasper look thoughtful, too.

Celia looked from one to the other, and wrinkled her forehead.

"Do you go to church?" she asked, abruptly.

"Oh, yes,—to your church."

"Then you must be all right," she said. "I was beginning to be afraid there was something wrong about you."

Mrs. Thorn laughed aloud; Celia's frankness amused her greatly.

"If I can help you, Celia, come to me again," she said, kindly. "But don't come through the window. You may bring your brothers, if you like. Perhaps I can be useful to them."

Celia frowned.

"What do you want to get out of me," she asked, harshly. "When people talk that-away, they generally want something out of you."

“Celia, Our Lord asks us to help one another, —and my son and I would like to help you.”

“I don’t want charity from anybody,” Celia said, standing up and tossing her head. Then she seemed to soften a little. “You look stuck-up, but you are not.”

“You can help us,” said Jasper, struck by a sudden thought. “I shall soon have to leave school to find something to do ;—maybe you can help *me*.”

Celia’s face lighted up.

“All right !” she said. “I’ll come again, and we’ll talk about it. Come, Monkey ! Good-bye !”

Jasper opened the door, and Celia, dragging Pasquale after her, went down the stairs.

“It is true,” he said, turning to his mother, “I *must* begin to work !”

CHAPTER VI.

“MY PLACE IS HERE.”

CELIA went down to her own rooms, with new thoughts in her mind. She was coming out of a new world, and this new world was Mrs. Thorn's apartments. Nobody, save the good Sisters,—she had gone to school for one year,—had ever taken an interest in her. Of late her frock and shoes had become so shabby that she had been ashamed to visit them. It is true people in the tenement house had been kind to her at times ; but their kindness had an object. It meant “Celia, take care of the baby this afternoon,” or, “Celia,—that's a dear !—run after the wagon and steal a large piece of ice !” Celia was young, but she had begun to learn the evil lesson that human nature is all selfish. Mrs. Thorn, however, seemed really to like her for herself.

Celia entered her rooms, pleased and yet dis-

satisfied. She found the supper dishes, unwashed, awaiting her, and that displeased her. She looked around the half dining-room, half kitchen and sometimes Pasquale's sleeping place, in disgust. There were no curtains on the windows, an old piece of rag carpet, of a brownish color, covered the center of the room. An oil-cloth, worn in spots, was on the table, where the tin dish-pan stood, with the unwashed cups and saucers around it.

"Oh, hold up your head!" she said, abruptly to Monkey, whom she had dragged in by the hand. "Don't slouch!"

Pasquale, accustomed to these sudden breaks in the temper of his guardian, merely took his fingers from his mouth and stared at her. On a tilted chair, with his feet on a projection of the stove, was a tall boy, of Jasper's age. His eyes were fastened upon an open book.

"Is pop home?" asked Celia, impatiently.

"You might know he isn't," answered the boy, without raising his eyes. "It's too quiet for him to be home."

Celia filled the dish-pan with water and began to dash the dishes about.

“Did you sell many papers, George?” she asked.

“Don’t bother me, Celia,” said George. “I’m busy. This is grand. Madeline,” he read, “had hardly reached the stern of the ship, when the pirate with his ax dripping with human gore, approached her. ‘Tell me, girl,’ he said, in those insinuating,—i-n-s-a-t-i-n-g,—no—i-n-s-u-a-t-i-n-g,—whatever that means,—accents she knew so well. ‘Where is the buried treasure hidden?’”

“I don’t care anything about Madeline or your buried treasure,” said Celia. “You are always reading such trash. What did you make to-day?”

“Oh, I forget!” And George went on reading. “Madeline did not blanch; she raised her soulful eyes towards the su warthy—s-w-a-r-t-h-y pirate,—what does that mean? ‘Unhand me, villain,’ she cried, ‘or by all the stars of yon high Heaven, your soul shall ere nightfall plunge down into the nether depth of the bottomless pit!’ Whew!” said George, “wasn’t she a stunner! This is a great book, Celia. It is called, ‘Madeline,’ or, ‘The Curse

of Guilt.' It is fine ! I'll let you read it when I get through."

"How much did you make ?" asked Celia.

"Madeline seizes the pirate in her lily-white hands; she grasps him by the throat. Her hands have the strength of steel, though they are as snowy as alaplaster. She throws him over the bulwark. He struggles; he regains the deck. He is down ! no,—he is up ;—with a dull, sickening thud the waters close over him !"

"George," said Celia, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself ; here I am working away and trying to keep things together, and you spend your time reading trash. How much did you make ?"

"Oh,—I had a good day,—extras. There's a dollar on the mantelpiece. But, mind, I'm to have a quarter on Saturday night, to go to the theater. The play is *great*,—all the fellows say. There's a real elephant on the stage——"

"Had Nick and Will their supper ?"

"Oh, yes, with me," said George, turning his good-natured face towards his sister. "I

wish I was a pirate! Anything would be better than this! I don't mind selling papers, Ceel, but it's the home we have. You're always scolding, and pop never comes home sober. If I knew where there were pirates, I'd go and be a pirate to-morrow,—not a bad pirate, you know. I wouldn't be very bloody; but I'd have a good time!”

Celia drew her red arms from the hot dish-water, and sat down upon an overturned bucket.

“It's no use,” she said, beginning to cry. “Here I am slaving away, while other girls are in stores as cash-girls, earning money and going to picnics on Sunday, and all you do is to find fault;—and the boys are always out!”

“Well,” said George, “why don't you stay in yourself! Here, Nick and little Will and I had to get our own supper, while you and Monkey go gallivanting all over New York. You can't expect the boys to stay at home. If mother had lived, it would be different. I say, Ceel, light a candle,—I can't see to read.”

“Can't afford a candle!” said Celia sharply, “if you are going to take a quarter for the theater.”

"Then I'll go and be a pirate," said George, closing his book, and lounging out of the room.

George was Celia's favorite brother ; he was good-natured, and a smile was rarely absent from his round, freckled face. He was liked by many people who bought papers in the City Hall Park, because he was kind and obliging. Nick was of sterner mould, cleverer than George, but more obstinate. Nicholas was only nine years of age, and his principal pleasures were swimming and base-ball,—which he seldom had a chance to play.

After George had gone, Celia wept again. Her mother's example had not been lost on her, nor had the Sisters'. She was passionately fond of play ; she hated, like all children, to be kept indoors ; she longed for music and toys and sunlight ; she had dreams of green leaves and clear waters and the song of birds ; she had been to Central Park once, with her mother ; and, at night, she often closed her eyes and imagined she was there again, in a little boat. Suddenly she felt her mother's kiss on her cheek ; then she would throw out her arms and find only empty space.

“Oh, mother!” she would cry; there would be no answer;—fortunately, the Sisters had taught her that this dear mother awaited her, with the most perfect of mothers, in Heaven.

Sitting disconsolate upon the overturned bucket, with the tears falling from her eyes, Celia heard a piano-organ in the street. It was playing “Maggie Murphy’s Home.” And the children were dancing; she could hear the scraping of their feet on the pavement, and their singing,—

“On Saturday night, ’tis my delight”—

Monkey had slid away; she was alone in the gloom of the dingy room, with the smell of the warm dish-water making the air more oppressive. She rose;—she would leave everything and go out and have some fun! What was the use? She might just as well enjoy herself and let her father and the boys take care of themselves. The buttons were off George’s best shirt; he could not go to Mass on Sunday if she did not sew them on; Nick’s stockings were all out at the heels, and he would not go to Mass barefooted,—for he was known among the boys in the neighborhood as

a dude, and Willie's collar needed to be washed and ironed. Besides, there were a hundred things that ought to be done in the next two days. But Celia folded her arms and asked sullenly, What is the use? Then a vision of her mother came before her,—a vision of her mother in the little boat on that one glorious day in Central Park, with the dear arms about her, and she seemed to whisper, "Take care of the boys!" Somehow or other the faces of her mother and Mrs. Thorn mingled together; there was the same gentleness and kindness in both. The strains of the organ broke in on her thoughts. The climax of the chorus swelled and the scuffling feet grew louder; her heart swelled; for she liked the music; it made her feel as if she had wings. Why not leave the boys and her father and run away? What was the use?

Upstairs, Jasper and his mother had been talking things over.

"There will be very little money left when all the bills are paid, mother," he had said. "And we can't ask Aunt Katharine for anything unless——"

"Unless you go to her," said his mother. "Oh, how I hate the thought of your working among rough and coarse men and boys for a mere pittance! I cannot consent to it, Jasper. You will grow up unscholarly, ungentelemanly!"

"Do you think a time will come when you will be ashamed of me, mother?" asked Jasper, a red flush burning on both cheeks. "Do you think you will ever love me less because I shall have rough hands and dirty working clothes?"

"But your Aunt Katharine will blame me," said his mother. "She will say that my foolish affection kept you down."

"Let her say what she pleases," said Jasper. "A son ought to be with his mother."

"I cannot endure the thought of your never being a gentleman——"

"I *will* be a gentleman, no matter what I do, mother! Do you think that all those nicely dressed boys at the riding-school were gentlemen? There's Ben Moran,—I thought he was a gentleman, but see,"—Jasper's voice trembled a little,—“see how he has treated me. No,

mother, that little girl has taught me a lesson, I must go to work, and at once !”

“No,” said his mother, “no,—I cannot consent to such a sacrifice. You must go to Aunt Katharine !”

There was a light knock at the door, which neither Jasper nor his mother heard. Celia entered, tears streaming from her eyes. She seemed thinner and more fragile than ever in the candle light.

“Oh, lady,” she cried, running up to Mrs. Thorn and burying her face in her frock, “I *had* to come to you ;—I want my mother so !”

Mrs. Thorn put her arms around Celia, with no thought of the rumpled hair or the red arms.

“Poor child !” she murmured.

“Oh, I want my mother so much !”

“And so do I !” said Jasper. “Aunt Katharine or no Aunt Katharine my place is here !”

CHAPTER VII.

“THE BOSS.”

THERE was no more talk of Jasper's going to Aunt Katharine after this. Mrs. Thorn had comforted Celia with words of sympathy, which were like rain-drops on a hot day to the little girl.

“If I were away from you, mother,” Jasper said, “it would be so much time lost. It would be just as if you were dead,—because all death can do is to separate people.”

Celia went down to her dark room a happier child than she had been since the death of her mother. And Mrs. Thorn said,—

“After all, it is not necessary to be rich in order to do some good in the world.”

“You would do good anywhere, mother,” said Jasper, with a sigh. “I wish I could see you cantering off on Annie Laurie again.”

"The past is past, Jasper,—let it go. To regret it will be to weaken ourselves for the present."

"I think that I had better ask Mr. Harkins' advice before I go to work. He will perhaps recommend me to somebody."

Mrs. Thorn thought this was a good idea. She opened her desk and wrote at once to Mr. Harkins, who was Aunt Katharine's agent and lawyer.

Nothing more was said about Jasper's future until noon the next day. A note from Mr. Harkins arrived. It cut short all Jasper's hopes of any help from him. It ran :

"Dear Madam : Both Mrs. Van Twiller Thorn and myself disapprove of your son's intention of leaving school. Mrs. Van Twiller Thorn will be glad to send Jasper to college or to take him abroad with her whenever you agree to accept her terms.

"Yours respectfully,

"H. T. HARKINS."

Mrs. Thorn sighed as she gave the note to Jasper.

"Well," Jasper said, "I'll just have to do my best. Have all the bills been paid, mother?"

"All ;—with the exception of the money you

got for Corsair, I have not ten dollars in the bank.”

“I must begin at once,” said Jasper. “Cheer up, mother;—I will be a great man yet, and you will be proud of me.”

Mrs. Thorn shook her head, and tears stood in her eyes.

“No,—do not let us deceive ourselves. You will be a poor, hard-working boy all your life——”

“I can’t be a boy all my life!” said Jasper with a laugh. “I wish I could, because, in that case, you would always be young.” He took her face between his hands and kissed her. “Cheer up;—I must tell you about this morning, mother. You know some of the boys at our school are rough. And because my clothes are nice, they call me ‘dude.’ But I don’t mind it much, though at first it made me mad. You know, mother, if boys see that you mind anything, they only do it more. Besides they have nicknames for everybody. I just let them call ‘dude,’—and I don’t blame them for finding fault with my good clothes, for some of the poor fellows are awfully ragged. But they got

an idea that I couldn't fight because I didn't;—so to-day at recess, a fellow named Smarty Gibbons struck a little boy under his size and held him down in the gutter. So I said,—‘Let that little fellow alone!’ But Smarty just laughed and punched the boy till he howled so that I knew he was hurt. The other fellows stood still,—they’re afraid of Smarty.”

“Why didn’t you tell the teacher?” asked Mrs. Thorn, horrified.

“Tell the teacher!” said Jasper, with a laugh. “Why, mother, one would think that you never went to school! If a boy told on another, he’d have a dog’s life. You have to fight things out for yourself;—and I am learning to do it. When Smarty hit the little boy in the head, I couldn’t stand it any longer. ‘You let him go!’ I said. The other boys all laughed,—for Smarty’s the strongest fellow in the school. ‘The dude hasn’t any muscle!’ they said. And that made me smile to myself,—it was no joke to hold Corsair in sometimes, and you know I was great with the dumbbells,—so I just stepped up to Smarty, and he dropped the little boy——”

“Oh, Jasper, I hope you didn’t fight!” exclaimed Mrs. Thorn.

“I had to!” said Jasper. “Father always said that I must hold my own and help the weak,—so I waded right in. Smarty didn’t touch me once; and I am sure, mother, you wouldn’t have known about the fight, if I had not told you of it.”

Mrs. Thorn was silent; she shuddered at the thought of her boy’s having to “hold his own” in this fashion. She looked closely at his teeth and his nose;—but he had come out of the conflict unhurt.

“The small boy,—his name is Donald Crew,—was all bruised, and when Smarty found that he couldn’t ‘do’ me, he went off. I don’t think he’ll touch Crew again.”

When Jasper went to school in the afternoon, the boys who were waiting at the gate, made way for him to pass. It was no small honor to have conquered the bully of the school; and the boys were quite ready to forgive his fine clothes. Mrs. Thorn had decided that Jasper should leave the school at the end of the week.

“Be sure, Jasper,” she said, “to leave a

good record. It may count in your favor some day."

Jasper had worked hard at his Catechism lesson and he was sure of his arithmetic. He felt that he could hold his own in geography, too, and he hoped that he would not entirely fail in grammar. Smarty Gibbons sat next to Jasper ; he kept his eyes averted until the time for the preparation of the arithmetic lesson came. Smarty was not particularly clever at arithmetic, though he was very good at grammar. The problem which perplexed Smarty was one of a number of "test" sums that had been given as **part of what the teacher** called a "competition."

"I say there, you're wrong," Jasper said, catching by chance a glimpse of Smarty's slate. "You have misunderstood the question,—it is not the *profit* on the bales of hay you ought to get,—not at all ! It's the whole amount the merchant received."

Smarty, who had been tearing his hair in doubt, for he knew that this problem might fall to him at the black-board, looked at Jasper in surprise. Then he frowned and looked sulky.

“You can’t fool me,” he whispered. “You mind your own business. I’m no kid,—you can’t set me wrong.”

Jasper was inclined to resent this. In his interest in the problem, he had forgotten all about the fight.

“Oh, very well,” he said. “If you don’t want to be helped, I can’t help you.”

Smarty bit his pencil for some time ; his face lighted up ; Jasper was right ; he had misunderstood the question. He felt sheepish ; but, though Smarty was inclined to be a bully, it was because he had been during his short life so constantly bullied himself. And he had been taught to expect it. The only glimpses of better things he had were in the school.

“Say,” he whispered, touching Jasper’s elbow, “I guess you were right. I’ve got the answer,—I thought you were fooling me because I tried to lick you. If you knew how aggravating that Crew is,—even if he is so little,—you wouldn’t blame me for punching him.”

“It’s all over now,” said Jasper. When school closed for the afternoon, the boys were

surprised to see the "dude" and Smarty shake hands.

"Come here, Donald," Jasper said to little Crew, who was sneaking away, "you shake hands with Smarty, too. He says that he wouldn't strike a boy under his size——"

"He is always doing it!" said little Crew, beginning to whimper. "Last summer he almost drowned me in the Battery Bath,—he's a bad one."

"I say, Gibbons," said Jasper, who felt that his muscle had earned him a right to be respected, "I'd like to know why you've got such a grudge against this little fellow. No gentleman will hit a boy under his size."

"Oh, Golly!" said Nicholas McGonigle, who sometimes came to school when the newspaper business was dull, "what tall talk! We don't go in for being gentlemen or dudes or swells."

"We're Catholics, aren't we?" asked Jasper, turning quickly. "And every Catholic ought to be a gentleman at heart, whether he wears good clothes or not. I happen to have good clothes,—and I am glad of it, for I like good

clothes,—but, when these are worn out I don't know where I am to get more. If we are to lie and to fight without necessity and to hit little boys just like Pagans, I don't see what good all our Catechism is going to do us,—that's all I've to say.”

The dozen boys who stood around Jasper in the school-yard were silent. Smarty Gibbons spoke up,—

“If you had a father that was humpback,” he said, reddening to the roots of his hair, “and your father drove a truck, you wouldn't let a boy go calling ‘humpty’ after him, would you? You'd lick that boy, wouldn't you?”

“Of course I would,” said Jasper.

“Well, there is the boy!” said Smarty, pointing to little Crew. Jasper was startled. The other boys laughed. Little Crew, who was fat and yellow-haired, started to run; Smarty held him tight by the collar.

“If I had known this,” Jasper said, “I believe I should have let Smarty go on as long as he liked.”

Smarty evidently took this for permission to attack little Crew again; but Jasper interfered.

"He is a small boy, Smarty,—don't forget that ; if he does it again, I'll take care of him."

Jasper said this seriously. The crowd of boys looked at one another, and submitted.

"Dere's good stuff in de dude," said Joe Lane, who had been Smarty's principal supporter.

"I guess you want to boss this crowd," said Smarty, half suspiciously.

"No, I don't," answered Jasper, "but I want to see that every boy has his rights. I'll not be here long ; I'll have to leave school on Monday."

"You like to talk big, don't you?" asked Billy Pitcher, whose close-cropped hair and turned-up nose were conspicuous in all rows.

"No, I don't," said Jasper, "with a crowd like this, I intended to let my muscle talk for me." He turned away, followed by Smarty and little Crew, who thought it safe to be near his temporary protector. The speech had its effect. There had been an intention on the part of the boys "to settle the dude's hash," now that he had relieved them of the hated rule of Smarty. Jasper had carelessly rolled

up his right sleeve ; it was plain that there was plenty of muscle there.

"Say," Smarty exclaimed, "do you want to go to the theayter to-night?"

"No," said Jasper, stopping. "I haven't any money, and I must stay at home with my mother ;—my father died only a short time ago."

"Oh" said Smarty, awkwardly. "I know a theayter where you can get checks after the first act. Some blokes I know always give 'em to me."

"Thank you." And then, with a sudden idea. "Smarty, I believe you want to be kind. If you do, I wish you would help me to get something to do."

Jasper walked on, little Crew ran into a side street, and Smarty stood still whistling. It was the first time that anybody had asked him for help,—and such a dude, too, with a fine Derby hat and tan shoes ! Smarty felt that he had grown several inches in height.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SNAKE IN THE GRASS.

JASPER heard that his Aunt Katharine had gone abroad. An account of his father's death came from the agents in Matanzas, as well as the announcement that the Cuban plantation Mr. Thorn had inherited was worthless. Mr. Thorn had gone upon the deck of the *Hyperion* on one stormy night, and disappeared. His hat was found on the deck after a heavy sea had swept over the barque. His boxes were sent and,—this made poor Jasper cry bitterly,—there came a tin cage containing a green and red paroquet. Mrs. Thorn stayed in her room for two days after the news came. Jasper proved his manhood by bravely keeping back his tears. The paroquet chattered in his brightly burnished tin cage, and Jasper discovered that he could talk, but not in English ; he repeated “ Buenas dias, Señor,” “ Buenas

dias, Señorita " many times. Jasper always gave him a cracker when he spoke,—consequently, he was constantly talking. Jasper wished that he could understand what he meant.

It is amazing how much trifles affect our lives. This "gibberish" of the paroquet had a great deal to do with Jasper's; he acquired, in his desire to know what Juanito was saying, a wish to study foreign languages.

Jasper did not sink under the weight of his sorrow. He went out early to Mass every day, while his mother lay prostrated. He knew she wanted him to do so, and it was a habit which he had made almost second-nature. On his way home, he bought the milk, rolls, and oranges which, as a rule, were their breakfast.

Mrs. Thorn had prayed that some hope would have come from Cuba. There was none. She and Jasper must struggle as best they could. In the meantime, he was learning some hard lessons; and one of these was that no harm can be done by withholding one's opinion, while much harm may be done by giving it.

Gibbons had begun by being friendly to

Jasper ; and no doubt he would have put him on the track of a working place, if Billy Patcher had not walked home from school with Jasper three days after the paroquet came.

“ You and Smarty are chums, aren’t you ? ” Billy said.

“ Chums ! ” said Jasper. “ No,—my mother is the only chum I have. But I like Smarty,—why do you call him ‘ Smarty ? ’ ”

“ Because he is real smart,” said Billy. “ Don’t you think he is ? ”

“ I fancy he might be,” answered Jasper. “ He is kind to me, at all events. But I wish he would not do such queer things. He is up to all sorts of monkey-tricks,—he is almost as bad as the little fellow in our home, Monkey Angliori.”

Billy Patcher was a boy of a kind that ought to go out of fashion in every Christian country. He was envious and jealous, and he had a habit of repeating all the unpleasant things he heard. The truth was that Gibbons was very annoying at times ; he made cat’s cradles with pieces of string in school ; he pretended to say his prayers in a gibberish he

called German,—and this habit, which was not funny at all, disgusted Jasper, who was a reverent boy.

As soon as Jasper had turned the corner Billy ran off to do the devil's work. Jasper had made up his mind, to speak to Smarty of his irreverence, for he was not accustomed to say things of anybody, which he was afraid to say to them. Probably if Jasper had known the school world better,—the school world being only a little picture of the great world,—he would have held his tongue until he met Smarty, and no harm would have been done. One may say many things to an acquaintance which seem entirely different when repeated to a third person.

Smarty Gibbons was watching an ice-wagon unloading huge blocks into the ice-cream factory, when Billy, out of breath, caught up to him.

"Say, Smarty," he said, "you think a great deal of Jasper Thorn, don't you?"

"What's that to you?" asked Smarty, sharply. "I think he's a good sort of a chap,—and he is as strong as any of us."

“You like him just because he wears good clothes and talks like a swell,” said Billy, jeeringly. “He is just as poor as any of us, if he does put on airs. He talks about Rugby,—I don’t believe that he ever played Rugby in his life. Anyhow, he talks mighty mean of you!”

Smarty was about to rush forward to get a chunk of ice which had broken from a big block ; but he stopped short. His color rose and he frowned.

“What did he say of me?”

“He called you a monkey!” said Billy, watching the effect of his words on Smarty. “At least, he said you acted like an ape. Of course I couldn’t stand that,—you’ve always been a chum of mine, Smarty.”

Smarty was cut to the quick ; but he did not want to show it. He ran into the street, secured the piece of ice, and began to warm it in his hands to get the sawdust from it.

“He is a fool!—that’s all!” said Smarty. I don’t care what he says. He’s a dude, anyhow ;—but I’ll fix him.”

“I wouldn’t be so hard on him, if I was

you," said Billy, delighted. "Perhaps he didn't say ape or monkey; it may have been baboon. He didn't mean anything."

"I'll teach him. Want a piece of ice?" said Smarty, dashing the lump on the sidewalk, where it broke into fragments, to relieve his feelings. "He's a fool!"

"After all, Smarty,—there's nobody like an old chum."

"I don't want any chums," said Smarty, bitterly. "I'll go it alone."

Billy picked up a piece of ice and thrust it into his mouth.

"Have you any checks for the theayter for Saturday night? There's a great play on at the Broadway."

"I don't care," said Smarty, feeling downhearted, for he had begun to like Jasper. "You needn't try to work me for bill-board passes. The man that keeps the saloon near our house gives me all I want,—but I've got lots of friends."

"I s'pose you'd rather give them to Jasper Thorn,—because he's a swell,—than to me," said Billy, becoming excited. "All right.

'Ain't Smarty like a baboon?' It makes me laugh when I think of it!"

"I don't care whether it does or not," exclaimed Smarty. "You'll not get passes from me!"

"Ain't Smarty like a gorilla?" cried Billy, tantalizingly.

"Did he say *that*?" asked Smarty, growing pale with anger.

"Oh, never mind what he said. That's the way dudes and swells and snobs treat people like us. We're poor,—we're nobodies. Oh, yes!"

Smarty picked up his atlas and arithmetic and turned away, leaving Billy pleased and yet enraged.

He had done his work, but he had not secured the tickets he expected.

"Smarty's got a 'pull' with the saloon-keeper that keeps theater signs in his windows," he thought, as he looked after Smarty's indignant back, "and I must keep in with him. That Thorn shall not have the tickets, anyhow."

Now theater tickets were the last things

Jasper would have asked for ; but Billy judged everybody by himself.

It happened that, as he turned the corner, he met Jasper coming, with a bright face and two large shining apples in his hand. They were certainly "beauties," as Billy Patcher said. They were green, with a shining blush of deep red on their cheeks.

"Father Freitag just met me and gave me these," he explained, "and I came back to find Smarty Gibbons ;—he's been kind to me, and I want to give him one."

Billy's heart turned green with jealousy,—at least, it changed in some way, just as a rose-petal changes when a regiment of green bugs invade it.

"All right !" said Billy. "All right ! I'm not saying anything,—mind ! I'm a friend of yours and a friend of Smarty's,—*but*, if a boy called me a fool, I wouldn't give him a regular prize apple,—I'd fool him,—I would !"

"But Smarty is an awfully kind fellow. He is going to help me to get a place for work."

"Oh, he is,—is he?" said Billy, fixing his eyes on the apple. "I've heard different. I

don't want to make mischief;—but I wouldn't give—but don't mind me, I'm too honest. I hate to see folks imposed on, I'll not tell,—yes, I will, though, you haven't been used to our rough ways. I have often seen you driving in a swell carriage and looking as if you didn't think us boys were dirt under your feet——”

“I never thought so,” said Jasper indignantly. “I just drove in my aunt's carriage without thinking at all. But I must find Smarty.”

“He called you a fool a moment ago !” said Billy.

Tears almost came into Jasper's eyes at this sudden blow.

“And he said you were a dude,—a no-account dude.”

“I don't believe it,” said Jasper. “I don't think he'd be so mean as that.”

Billy laughed unpleasantly.

“Well,—there he is on the corner ; he left me,—go and ask him.”

Smarting with the pain of Billy's brutal speech, Jasper went up to Smarty, who had

been loitering about the corner in a sullen and angry frame of mind.

Billy Patcher tried to grasp Jasper's arm, but he was shaken off. Smarty was not aware that Jasper was near him until he turned, thinking that Billy Patcher was approaching. When he saw Jasper, his face assumed an ugly look.

"Smarty!" said Jasper, holding out the apple, "I've——"

"Don't 'Smarty' me. My name is Aloysius Gibbons,—and I don't want to be nick-named by no sneaking dude that thinks he is better than other fellows."

"Oh, very well!" said Jasper proudly. "I don't call boys 'fools' behind their backs!"

"Or gorillas?"

"No," said Jasper.

"Or apes?"

"No."

"Nor monkeys of any kind?"

Billy Patcher had come to the corner, to overhear the dialogue.

"Nor baboons?"

"No," said Jasper. He was very angry.

But, with that piety which is so fine in a boy, he paused and said a 'Hail Mary' rapidly. He was tempted to strike Smarty; that 'Hail Mary' saved him; and just then a heavy truck laden with iron crushed against the curbstone. If Jasper had thrown Smarty into the street, he would certainly have fallen under those heavy wheels.

Smarty doubled up his fist; but the look in Jasper's earnest face made him pause.

"Here, Patcher," he said, angrily, "you tell this dude what you told me!"

"And you tell Smarty what you told me!"

Billy turned to run; but Smarty gripped him by the collar.

"Let him go," said Jasper, disdainfully. "I understand it all. Let him go. I ought to have known that a boy who carries tales is no better than a snake in the grass. Let him go," Jasper repeated, as Smarty shook Billy viciously. Smarty dropped Billy, whose face assumed a wretched look of supplication. Jasper thrust both the apples into Billy's hand.

"Take them," he said, "if you wanted *them*, you can have them. You ought to be paid for

being so mean. A million apples wouldn't be too much for a—lie."

Billy snatched the apples and ran away.

"Fool!" he called back, "Monkey!"

Jasper and Smarty turned away from each other;—the evil had been done.

CHAPTER IX.

JASPER AND THE BABY.

JASPER was unhappy, as he went home. Life seemed suddenly to have become dark in his eyes. And, to make matters worse, his mother was out when he reached the house. This made the gloom appear darker. To miss his mother when he came home was a veritable affliction. His first question had always been,—

“Where is mother?”

He put his books in the closet, and took a chair by the window. The street below was quiet at this hour, but, as he looked at it, he felt a great desire to take his mother and fly away somewhere. Life had begun to have gleams of hopefulness, in her good health and the friendly feeling of some of the boys at school. But the great grief into which she had

been thrown by the latest news, and Billy Patcher's treachery, had made these disappear. A tap sounded at the other window and Jasper parted the red curtains. He saw Monkey Angliori and Celia McGonigle on the fire-escape.

"We tried the door," said Celia, who carried a paper parcel carefully in her hand, "but it wouldn't open, so we thought we'd come in this way. How is your mammy? I brought her something I knew she'd like."

"Mother is out," said Jasper, raising the window, "I think she has gone to church."

"To church? Why this isn't a holy day!" said Celia, in surprise.

"She often goes to church; it does her good," said Jasper.

"I wouldn't be surprised," answered Celia, entering the room. "I like the smell of the incense and the coolness and the lights and the flowers. Whenever I have a headache I feel like going to church; but I can't always; there is something to do. You, Monkey!—you've torn your cap again,—oh, *maledictu!*"

Celia uttered this word with great fierceness,

under the impression that something approaching to Italian would touch Monkey, whose faded red fez showed a broken place among many darns.

“It tore !” said Monkey, sadly, taking off the fez and putting his finger through the hole.

“Dear me !” said Celia, “I am so scroomish, I don’t know what to do ! I’m sewing all the time,—Monkey’s worse than ten children !”

“Scroomish ?” asked Jasper, interested and forgetting his own griefs. “What does that mean ?”

“Oh, just—scroomish !” said Celia, “if you don’t understand, you don’t have to,—that’s all ! Oh, dear, I wish I had a home like yours,—and *such* a mother ! Monkey, keep still !”

Monkey was wriggling on his chair and pulling at the curtains. He straightened himself at once. Celia opened the packet very carefully. She took away four coverings of crumpled tissue paper and disclosed three pink roses. They were not very fresh. They are of the kind left over from great dinners or unsold in the large stores for many days ; but to Celia they were gloriously beautiful.

“There were some white ones,—but I didn’t like ’em half so well,” said Celia.

Jasper looked at the flowers carelessly. Three roses, somewhat the worse for long keeping, did not strike him as worth noticing. He remembered the great Jacqueminots and Marechal Neils his mother used to have; he turned away and sighed; the gloom came back.

Monkey looked at Jasper to enjoy his admiration, as Celia held up the roses. Jasper’s face was towards the window. How common and dull life was here!

He thought of Ben Moran; he thought of the old days when Ben and he had cantered together in the Park, and had said that they would always be friends. And Ben Moran had been so different from other boys,—so much more gentle and kind!

Celia watched him in amazement.

“You don’t seem to care for my flowers,” she said sharply.

“Oh, yes,” Jasper answered with a sigh.

“They’re very nice!”

“I call them beautiful!” Celia said, holding

up one daintily in her hand. "Isn't that a beaut, Monkey?"

"Bella!" exclaimed Monkey, sucking the dingy tassel of his fez.

"He means 'beautiful!'" said Celia. "Why, what's the matter? You look as if you had lost all your relations!"

Jasper sighed.

"My!" said Celia. "If I was as happy as you I'd just *fly*. Look at this *grand* room!—and such a mother! I'd sing all day long, if I had a mother like yours,—that I would! I just wish I could work for your mother,—I'd do it for nothing. It would be just scroomish!"

"It is all very well to have the things you think so grand, Celia," Jasper said, forgetting in his loneliness that Celia was a stranger, "but if boys were mean to you,—if you had a friend who forgot you, and if boys lied about you!——"

"Oh, that's nothing," said Celia, cheerfully. "You must have gone on velvet, or you wouldn't mind. I don't trust anybody, except the priest or your mother. Monkey there tells awful lies almost every day."

Monkey dropped the tassel of his fez and opened his mouth wide. After a minute of thought, he uttered a loud howl.

"Maybe he does not know what a lie is," said Jasper, when Monkey had closed his lips again.

"He ought to," said Celia, sharply, "I slap him often enough. I wish your mammy would come. I just want to see the expression of her face when she sees those beautiful flowers!"

Jasper forgot his own gloom as he watched Celia petting the roses as if they were alive. It seemed odd that she should find so much pleasure in those faded flowers.

While Celia bent over the roses and Jasper watched her, a knock sounded at the door. Monkey ran and opened it. Mrs. Thorn entered, and Jasper ran to kiss her.

"You look tired, mother," he said.

"I am tired, dear," his mother said, "but it always rests me to see you. And Celia is here!"

Celia held out the roses, her eyes sparkling.

"I bought them for you! There were some

white ones at the stand, but they were not so fresh," Celia said.

Mrs. Thorn took the roses with a bright smile. If they had been American Beauties at a dollar apiece, she could not have seemed more pleased.

"How kind of you, Celia! Let me give you and Monkey some sponge-cake and a glass of milk."

Monkey grinned from ear to ear, showing a set of the soundest white teeth. Jasper felt very proud of his mother. Some people, he thought, would have smiled at the faded roses, which poor Celia had made a sacrifice to buy, and not put them carefully in water as his mother was doing. Jasper looked at her with delight, as she moved gracefully about the room.

Jasper, Celia, and Monkey enjoyed the sponge-cake and the milk. Celia suddenly became very shy, and when Monkey ran to the fire-escape, to go out, she called him back.

"That is right, Celia," Mrs. Thorn said, "Monkey must always go in and out the door."

Celia's face reddened.

"I am sorry that I came up the fire-escape, ma'am," she began.

"I understand," Mrs. Thorn answered, "you were so anxious to bring me the roses that you didn't think."

Celia smiled, greatly pleased.

After the visitors had gone, Jasper took his usual place on the sofa beside his mother.

"Mother," he said, "I saw how nicely you taught Celia that she ought not to come in by the fire-escape,—and you might have scolded her!"

"Scolding would only have hurt her feelings," said Mrs. Thorn, "of course, it was necessary to tell her indirectly not to come in by the fire-escape."

"And the roses!" said Jasper, laughing. "What faded things! Aunt Katharine would have had the butler throw them out."

"Ah, Celia made them precious by her thoughtfulness,—the gift is nothing,—the intention everything. But, Jasper, I have something serious to tell you. Celia's gift made me forget it for a moment. Yesterday I got notice that a debt of your father's is unpaid.

I paid it to-day, and that leaves me penniless, —so, if there are no oranges for dessert, you wouldn't mind ; or, if——”

“Mind !” said Jasper, “I am sure I'd rather live on bread and water than have one of father's debts unpaid. That's nothing, mother. When I see you sorry I feel how light my sorrows are. When I came home from school, I was 'blue,' you know, because Billy Patcher lied about me, and that made me think of Ben Moran.”

His mother put her arm around his neck.

“We have each other !” she said.

Then they had dinner, but no oranges for dessert. Jasper was in high spirits. This doing without the oranges seemed to be one way of helping. How he longed to get work !

The next day was “free,” as the boys at school called it. There was “no school.” Jasper resolved to look for work. . When he arose the next morning, all the darkness of the day before had passed. He welcomed the new sunlight with all the joy that a healthy boy with a good conscience ought to feel.

He said his prayers as devoutly as he could.

People had often told him that he ought not to ask for temporal things. And after he had said his usual morning prayers, he knelt in thought. Why should he not ask St. Joseph to help him to find work? Why? He could see no reason; so he said, as if he were talking to his father,—

“Dear St. Joseph, I want something to do; I want a chance to help my mother and to get her a better place in which to live. You know I don’t care for myself, though I hope some day to earn an education. Now ask God to assist me to a chance. Do! *do! do!*”

He said five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys and dressed, feeling “as light as a feather.”

His mother was surprised by his unusual merriment, as they came from Mass, and he actually kissed her a dozen times, over the breakfast of coffee and toast.

“Mother,” he said, “you’ll not mind if I take a lunch and stay down town all day?”

His mother started.

“Why?”—she began.

“No ‘whys,’ if you please,—just let me go; I am going to find a gold mine.”

Tears moistened Mrs. Thorn's eyelashes.

"It will be hopeless, dear. You have no friend!"

"Haven't I?" asked Jasper, thinking of his prayer. "We'll see. And look at these strong hands!"

Mrs. Thorn smiled.

"Well," she said, "you may go. I'll mend your school clothes while you are away;—I suppose you'll wear your best things."

"Certainly," said Jasper. "Oh, mother, do you remember how proud I was of my first trousers. They seemed what our old teacher used to call an 'historical event.' I was such a foolish little boy!"

Mrs. Thorn laughed, in spite of herself. "You are such a wise boy now,—age makes such a difference, doesn't it?"

"I suppose that it would be hard to do some things," Jasper said. "I wonder if somebody set me to work at laying bricks and I should meet Ben Moran and his sisters when I was coming home covered with mud and mortar—I wonder whether I should be ashamed or not!"

"I hope not," said Mrs. Thorn. "Work of all kind is honorable, if we do it for God's sake."

"I think I should be a little ashamed, mother,—I'm afraid I should ! Well, mother, I am going to work at anything St. Joseph sends me."

Jasper took his luncheon, done up in a piece of oiled paper in a pasteboard box.

As he reached the corner, he observed that the Italian at the corner fruit-stand seemed to be in a state of great anxiety. He had his eyes fixed on some object in the street, at a distance ; he wrung his hands and murmured to himself. He caught Jasper's eye, and perhaps seeing a gleam of sympathy there, he spoke,—

"My boy—a is gone,—my little boy—a,—he is gone !"

"Where?" Jasper asked.

"I know not," said the man, wringing his hands. "He is one year old ; he was playing with Monkee Anglioni,—but Monkee went away ; he is a vera little boy ; the cars may kill him. I cannot leave my place ; the thieves will rob-a me."

Jasper knew the man ; he bought oranges from him every morning.

“If you care to trust me,” he began, impulsively, “I’ll keep the stand until you come back.”

The Italian looked at him quickly. Experience had made him suspicious,—especially of boys. A man must think twice before he leaves a stand full of bananas, plums, and oranges in charge of a boy. But the Italian was anxious about his little boy ; he took another look at Jasper and darted down the street.

Jasper called after him, but he did not answer. There was no need,—for the boy found the answer to the question on the placards stuck among the fruit ; the prices were all marked. Jasper amused himself by turning the peanut-roaster. He laughed to himself as he thought of his Aunt Katharine’s face, if she should see him selling fruit at a stand.

Suddenly from under the stand, there came a little cry. Jasper guessed that there must be a cat hidden somewhere. He stooped and opened the door of the closet beneath the stand. He thrust in his hand ; but, instead of touching

the fur of a cat, he caught something very soft, like a baby's hand. It was a baby's hand!—and it clung to his very tightly. From out the gloom of the space, there appeared a plump, dark, little face, showing a row of white teeth and two bright black eyes.

He lifted the child in his arms.

“Tony!” the little fellow said, gripping his cheeks hard.

“Well, Tony,” Jasper said, “you be a good boy until your father comes back,—will you?”

The little boy looked at Jasper and two tears rolled down his cheeks, but he did not weep any more. Jasper did not know much about babies, but he knew that they could cry, and he was most anxious to keep this one from crying;—so he tossed Tony in his arms and tried to talk “baby” to him;—but as he had forgotten how people talked “baby” to him long ago, he found it rather hard.

“You’re a goody little boyey,” Jasper said, “do you like candy and cooky?”

The baby seemed horrified by these expressions; he opened his eyes wide and howled. Jasper held him tight and felt very unhappy.

There was no woman in sight ; there were men on wagons and trucks. Little Crew came in sight ; he stopped in front of Jasper and the baby and bent almost double with laughter. Jasper blushed to the roots of his hair.

“What shall I do with it?” he asked helplessly of little Crew.

“Spank it !” said little Crew, grinning. Then he picked up a big banana and ran away.

Jasper was inclined to drop the baby and chase him ; but the baby screamed so loudly that Jasper had to hold him tight. A frightful thought occurred to him,—suppose the baby should burst a blood-vessel. He had heard of such a thing, and the baby’s face grew redder and redder. Perspiration came out on Jasper’s face. Oh, if somebody would only come !

Somebody did come ; little Crew and a strange boy stole up behind Jasper and the baby and stole a bunch of bananas that hung near the edge of the stand. Jasper was helpless. As he turned he saw Crew and his companion dividing the bananas,—only a few paces from him. They knew that they were safe as long as that baby clung to him.

Jasper almost wept ; he shook his disengaged fist at the thieves. What was the use of anger ?—but if he could only catch them !

The baby became quiet for a moment. Jasper prepared to lay it down on a bunch of grape leaves in the flat basket near the stand. The moment that the child became aware of his intention, he gripped both his cheeks until Jasper felt that there would be permanent dimples in them and yelled at the top of his voice.

“What is the boy doing to that child ?” asked a soft voice.

Jasper raised his eyes. A face, with a reproachful look on it, was gazing at him. A woman, elegantly dressed, was standing in front of the stand, holding a boy by the hand. Jasper, with a flush of shame, recognized them at once. It was Ben Moran with his mother !

Jasper wished that the baby was up in the clouds and the fruit-stand down in the earth. He did not speak to his old friend, but turned away.

“Why, it’s Jasper Thorn,” he heard Mrs.

Moran say. "Poor creature! What would his Aunt Katharine say?"

Jasper kept his head turned aside.

"Shall I speak to him, mamma?" asked Ben.

"He doesn't seem anxious to speak to you, Ben. Come on!" Mrs. Moran said. "Poor boy!" she added, but Jasper did not hear her. "To think of how he has fallen,—nursing an ugly Neapolitan child and selling fruit at a corner. Really, Ben, you can't afford to know him."

"He didn't seem to want to know me," said Ben. "He need not have flushed up so,—he might have remembered that I am an old friend of his;—he just 'cut me dead,' as you say when somebody doesn't speak to you, mamma."

They passed on. Jasper's thoughts were bitter; he forgot the howling baby; he said to himself,—“There goes my best friend; he will not speak to me because I am poor. The way of the world,—and a wretched way it is!”

He could find no consolation, except in the “Hail Mary” he murmured. After all, there is always God!

Jasper was suddenly kissed on both cheeks and hugged by a man who smelt of garlic. It was the Italian, who had returned, followed by his wife, who also embraced Jasper.

"You have found our Tony!" cried the mother. "Ah, you are an angel,—an angel of St. Antony!"

"Eccolo!" exclaimed the father, taking the baby. "Our boy—a was lost; his mother left him with me,—and he lost himself. Altro! he is here! Our good—a American child has found him. I love the good American boy!"

The mother took Tony from his father, and he smiled and gurgled and seemed very happy. Then both father and mother beamed on Jasper and thanked him.

"You will take your oranges every morning, and you will no pay—a," said the Italian, "not a cent—a!"

And the mother thrust two large pears into his hand. Jasper thanked them, and went on his way. When he turned into Broadway, he remembered all at once that he had not spoken of the stolen bananas. What if the Italian should think that he took them?

CHAPTER X.

JASPER'S PLACE.

JASPER'S head was full of his troubles, which seemed very great to him. He tingled all over as he remembered Ben's look. If he had committed a wicked act, he could not have felt more ashamed of himself. And, after all, he had done nothing but take care of a baby, which in itself was a kind action. As he walked down Broadway, he recalled little Crew's laugh, too, and he felt like going back to explain to the Italian the reason why that bunch of bananas was missing.

By the time he had pushed his way a block or two, he had got himself into a tearful condition of mind. The only thing for him to do was to go back home and to tell his mother all about it ; he felt that he *must* go home ; he was too sad to think of facing the world.

He was rudely awakened by a heavy blow on his shoulder.

"Hello, young fellow," said a gruff voice, "don't you see that they're swinging a safe over your head ;—and, if you trail along like a snail, it will perhaps crush you."

Jasper awoke instantly from his melancholy dream. He jumped into the street and gained the other side. Sure enough !—a huge iron safe was hoisting to a nine-story building. A policeman,—the one who had warned him,—was keeping the sidewalk clear of people. There was a defect in the rigging, and, consequently, danger that the safe might at any moment fall.

Jasper looked at the black object, dangling lopsidedly from the slim ropes, and shuddered. Suppose he had been crushed ! Suppose that monstrous mass of iron had fallen on him, what a horrible home-coming it would have made for him. The picture of his mother ;—but he turned pale at the thought.

There was a shout from the crowd ; the policeman darted into the middle of the street ; the pulley had given way, and the safe slid

down the ropes with fearful velocity. Just as everyone expected it to make a huge hole in the sidewalk, it stopped short. There were pale faces above it in the windows and anxious faces below ; but the crash did not come ; the safe remained suspended a few yards from the sidewalk. There was a midshipman, plainly from Annapolis, who had watched the safe with eager eyes. Two Sisters of Charity had paused near him, both clasping their rosaries.

The midshipman turned to Jasper.

“Ho, boy,” he said, turning to Jasper, who had just gained the sidewalk, “if I were you, I’d go to sea,—it’s safer than Broadway.”

Jasper smiled ;—the young sailor’s bright look was infectious.

“If that safe were to come down on me, I’d rather be one of those Sisters of Charity than anybody else in this crowd. Glory ! how near to death we are on land !”

Jasper was sober at once ;—it was true ; the only safety, he thought, is always to be in a state of grace ; so he went on, murmuring an Act of Contrition. But even the episode of the

safe did not drive Ben Moran from his head. It was bad enough to have been found by the aristocratic Morans attending an Italian's fruit-stand,—but, the additional sting, was that he had that strange and not very clean baby in his arms. Well, Ben Moran might think what he pleased !—Jasper Thorn was only a poor working boy, anyhow ; he would never ride Corsair again,—never meet Ben Moran ; and, at any rate, there was no disgrace in minding a baby ;—other working boys had to do it every day !

By this time he had got down to the magnificent building of the Postal Telegraph Company. It occurred to him that he might as well go in there, to ask if a boy was wanted.

Jasper was shy ; he had never been in contact with the great world. How he envied the chipper messenger-boys, who passed in and out of the building ;—the same so much at ease ;—how bright life must be to boys who were at home everywhere.

Once in the great hall of the building, Jasper did not know which way to turn. People were busy everywhere, especially at the telegraphic

desks. To whom should he speak? He saw a priest enter rapidly from the street. Jasper knew he was a priest, not only because he wore a Roman collar, but because he looked like a priest. The boy wished he dared to speak to him. The priest approached one of the desks and the operator respectfully raised his hat.

"Ah," said Jasper to himself, "I'll speak to that man,—he has a good face."

When the telegrapher had taken the priest's message, Jasper went up to him.

"Well?" he said, keeping his eyes on a yellow telegraph slip.

"Please,—do you want a boy?" asked Jasper with a slight tremor in his voice.

"A boy?" asked the telegrapher, not raising his eyes. "No. They're as plenty as blackberries and not much good. I've got a lot here I wish the Company would get rid of,—but I heard somebody say that the Berkshire Insurance Company upstairs wanted one. You go up and see!"

Jasper turned away. "Go up? Go up—where?" He was too shy to ask. He saw the cage of the elevator, and he entered it.

Up it went, and Jasper strained his eyes to see the name of the Berkshire Life Insurance Company on one of the landings. The elevator went up and down again.

"Do you intend to get a free ride all day?" asked the elevator man, suddenly.

"Oh!—do you mean me?" asked Jasper.

"Yes,—you," said the man.

"I want to go to the Berkshire Life Insurance Company."

"Why didn't you say so?—I'm not a mind-reader," said the man. He let his cage fill up with people and started up. Suddenly he called out "Berkshire" and Jasper stepped upon the landing. He went timidly along the corridor until he saw the name he was looking for on a plate-glass door. It may seem strange to you boys who have been in the world a great deal that Jasper's heart thumped violently as he turned the knob. He found himself in a handsome office; he was conscious of a great deal of light in a small room and of the color of the crimson carpet on the floor. Then the door of an inner office opened and a tall man looked at him in a kindly way.

"Well, little man?" he said.

"I want a place, sir," answered Jasper, clearing his throat.

"A place?" repeated the man.

"Yes, sir," said Jasper, "I heard that you wanted a boy up here."

"I'm sorry," answered the man, who seemed to Jasper to be the most imposing and stately person he had ever met, "but the place was filled yesterday; we have a very nice boy."

Jasper's heart sank; he liked the looks of the tall man, whose graceful and kindly manner reminded him of the old days.

"I am sorry, too, sir," he said. "I want work very badly, and I hoped that I might find it here."

"There's always plenty of work here," said the man, smiling, "but not of the kind a boy can do. Ah, Mr. Catherwood," he added, turning towards the inner door, "have you any work for a boy with a clean face and a clean collar to do in your office?"

An elderly man, with a pleasant face, and merry blue eyes, came into the doorway.

"A boy with a clean face? Has there ever

existed such a boy?" he said. "You might as well talk of a boy that doesn't chew gum, or read dime novels, or swear, or who walks fast when he is sent out. There are no boys of this kind."

"I chew gum sometimes," said Jasper, reddening, "and I have read two detective stories, but mother told me to stop, and I stopped. But I have never sworn in my life,—never! And, if you will try me, sir, I think I will show you that I can go of an errand as fast as anybody."

"You wouldn't even stop to see a dog-fight?"

"No, sir!" said Jasper, promptly.

"Or try to pick a nickel out of a hole in the sidewalk?"

Jasper hesitated; the old gentleman's eye twinkled and he jabbed his friend in the ribs.

"Now wouldn't you stop on your way to the Bank, for instance, to mind a poor, forlorn baby?"

Jasper's face grew redder and redder. What did this gentleman know about the baby? He looked up into Mr. Catherwood's face; he was frowning and grave.

"I am not ashamed of that, sir," Jasper answered. "But I am sure that if I had been sent on an errand of importance, I should not have stopped to look after the Italian's stand."

"Oh, it was you, then? I thought it was! I just happened to be passing," said Mr. Catherwood, unbending his brows. "It was a good-natured act, and I'd like to have had your friend who stole the bananas by the ears. I'll try this boy, Arthur."

"All right!" said the first man, going back into the inner office. "Come to-morrow at ten,—your policy will be ready!"

"Thank you, Arthur."

Jasper stood like one dazed. This gentleman would try him! A minute before he had been in a fever to get the place; now he almost regretted that he had it;—he felt that he would never, never be able to satisfy this clever old gentleman who seemed to know exactly what he wanted.

"My name's Catherwood," the old gentleman said, seriously, as he and Jasper entered the elevator. "And yours?"

"Jasper Thorn."

"Yes ?—Thorn. Well, Thorn, you'll have to work hard ; but, more than that, you'll have to do exactly what I tell you to do."

"I'm willing, sir."

"I happen to want a boy in my office, and I like your looks. But if I hadn't found you good-naturedly looking after that Italian baby I don't say I would have engaged you,—that's all. Kindness to the poor is a fine thing. Now to business." Mr. Catherwood said no more until they landed ; then he looked at his watch.

"It is rather early to lunch ;—but I take mine somewhat earlier than other people. Come with me ; I want to talk to you, and it will save time."

Jasper walked obediently beside Mr. Catherwood, who led the way to a restaurant filled with little tables.

"It's what they call a dairy restaurant," Mr. Catherwood said, unfolding his napkin ; Jasper did not notice that his eyes were fixed closely on him. "What will you have ?"

Jasper, who had seen a waiter carry a plate of steaming hot wheat cakes past him, said frankly,—

"I'll take some wheat cakes, with maple syrup and a cup of coffee, if you don't mind."

"Why should I mind?" said Mr. Catherwood, laughing. "Waiter, bring the boy's order and let me have a chop, with baked potatoes."

Jasper's nervousness had gone. The bustle of this big eating-house, in which the electric lights shone in daylight interested him. It seemed to extend a block, so deep was it, and the absence of windows, except in the front and back, would have made it a cave of gloom, were it not for the lights. Nearly all the small red mahogany tables had occupants by this time, and the waiters were hurrying and calling out orders at a great rate.

"Why don't you take a chop?" asked Mr. Catherwood, when the waiter had brought a pile of hot cakes for Jasper.

"It's a fast-day ;—I can't eat meat."

"Oh," said Mr. Catherwood, with another quick glance at Jasper. "You're a Catholic."

"Yes, sir," answered Jasper ; it struck him as odd that everybody should not know that ;

then he smiled to think how foolish this feeling was.

Mr. Catherwood watched Jasper use his knife and fork as if it made a difference to him whether his office-boy should eat like a gentleman or not. Jasper helped Mr. Catherwood to the salt and pepper and poured out some coffee for him when the waiter brought the nickel-plated coffee-pot. Mr. Catherwood accepted the cup, said he believed he would take some coffee, and told the waiter to bring another cup and saucer for Jasper.*

"Parents alive?" Mr. Catherwood asked.

"My mother is living, sir ;—we are alone."

"Do you live far from here?"

"In Bleeker Street, sir."

Mr. Catherwood said,

"Humph !"

Jasper began to feel nervous,—perhaps Mr. Catherwood might not like to employ a boy who lived in Bleeker Street.

"I have an office in Wall Street, Thorn,—and I'll tell you what I want. I want, first of all, an obedient boy ; second, I want a boy of common sense ; third, I want a polite boy ;—I

presume that you are an honest boy. Have you ever worked before ?”

“No,—I have gone to school.”

“Humph !” said Mr. Catherwood. Jasper wished he knew what he meant.

“You can read and write well ? All right ! Now, for references.”

Jasper was prepared for this ; he gave the name of his dear friend, the priest.

“I’ll write to him. You will have to be at my office at eight o’clock every morning. You must never be late. You arrange all letters neatly on the small desk in the corner of the larger office. You must dust everything in the office, and look after the register,—you’ll find a thermometer in the small office. Never let it show more than seventy ;—you’ll wait in the outer office and occupy yourself with such work as my clerk will give you,—letting nobody come in to me until you have his card or name. If I’m not in, be sure to get the names of *all* that come, and make a note of them in writing.”

Jasper’s eyes brightened ; all this seemed easy enough.

“Of course you’ll go to the Bank once a day ;—and there’s another thing,—but that will depend.”

“I’ll do my best, sir,” said Jasper, letting his coffee get cold.

“I’ll give you four dollars a week ;—if you deserve more you’ll get it.”

“Oh, thank you !” exclaimed Jasper, “that will be more than enough.”

“Will you have an apple or some sweets ?” asked Mr. Catherwood, as the waiter brought the checks.

“No, thank you !” said Jasper, “I’d like to get to work as soon as possible.”

“To begin to earn the four dollars,—hey ?”

Jasper smiled.

“Well,” Mr. Catherwood said, giving him a card, “you may begin. Go to that address, and wait for me. A boy applied this morning by letter. If he comes, tell him that you have the place.”

Mr. Catherwood and Jasper walked to the street. Jasper touched his cap, clasped the card closely in his pocket, and walked down Broadway. Mr. Catherwood looked after him.

“Perhaps I was wrong to hire him in such a hurry. At any rate, he has good manners,” he thought; he plunged into the crowd, entered the Chemical Bank, and forgot all about Jasper.

Jasper found the office in Wall Street. There was a boy in the outer office, but, as his back was turned, Jasper paid no attention to him; he went into the other office. There a young man was busy before a big folding desk. He had a light mustache, and a rose in his buttonhole. He looked at Mr. Catherwood’s card.

“Very well,” he said, “you’re the new boy, are you? Thorn?” he added, looking again at the words penciled by Mr. Catherwood on the card. “Jasper Thorn? Well, Thorn, go out into the other office, and wait till I find something for you to do. I’m busy now.”

Jasper obeyed. He sat down on one of the red leather-covered chairs in the outer office.

“Hello!” exclaimed a voice he knew. “What are you doing here?”

The boy, who had been looking at a map of New York hung on the wall, was facing Jasper.

"Oh,—it's you!" Jasper said, coldly.

"Of course it's me," said Billy Patcher, with a look of suspicion in his eyes. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm the new office-boy," Jasper answered. "Mr. Catherwood has just hired me."

Billy's eyes seemed to bulge out.

"This is my place," he said. "Smarty Gibbons heard of it from a district messenger-boy. He told me ;—now you just git,—*git*, I say,—vamoose this ranch,—go! I wrote a note last night. It's my place, if I have to fight for it."

Jasper looked Billy Patcher straight in the eye.

"Billy Patcher," he said, "if you needed this place worse than I do, I'd give it up. But I'm too glad to get it ;—though I'll not fight for it. I'm here and I'll stay here until Mr. Catherwood comes."

"No, you won't!" whispered Billy, shaking his fist in Jasper's face, "you'll git,—that's what you'll do." He got close to Jasper and tried to hit him. Jasper warded off the blow, and, having some strength in his arm, Billy

got a severe blow and rolled on the floor. As he lay there, the outer door opened, and Mr. Catherwood entered.

“What’s this?” he asked in alarm ; and, with a glance at Jasper, “Fighting already? I’m afraid you won’t do for this place, Thorn.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE BANK BOOK.

BILLY PATCHER gathered himself up, limped towards a chair and put his hands to his sides.

“My ribs is broke,” he said, “and I feel as if there was a big lump on my heart. Please, sir, I’m the boy that wrote you a note yesterday. I came for the place.”

Billy talked very glibly, his hand held tight to his side. Mr. Catherwood looked at both the boys, with a frown on his forehead. Jasper met his glance frankly, without speaking. He wished, with all his heart, that he had not hit out so hard. He had seen too many of the tricks at school to believe that Billy Patcher was seriously injured. He was sure that Mr. Catherwood would send him home ; it was too bad ; he must submit.

“Mr. Herbert,” Mr. Catherwood called out,

“will you bring me the note we received yesterday from a boy who said somebody had told him that there was a place vacant here?”

The young man with the yellow mustache and the gray clothes brought a letter in a yellow envelope.

“Are you William John Patcher?”

“Yes,” said Billy, forgetting his ribs and the lump on his heart, “that’s my name.” He winked maliciously at Jasper.

“And you go to school regularly?” asked Mr. Catherwood, the twinkle coming into his eyes.

“Oh, yes,—quite regular; I’m one of the best boys there,” said Billy, unblushingly.

“What school do you go to?” asked Mr. Catherwood.

“St. Clare’s.”

“Umph!” grunted Mr. Catherwood. “And, if you’re the best boy at St. Clare’s, it must be a queer school. Let me read your note for you. It’s very carelessly written, and I’ll spell each word for you. ‘Dear Sur, I—small I—heer that you knead a boy. I am a gud and onest bouy. I will wurk hard. A frend who had it

from a distrik messenger told me so, I remane yours to kommand,

“WILLIAM JOHN PATCHER.”

“What’s the matter with that?” said Billy. “There may be a mistake or two, but a fellow can’t write like a schoolmaster all the time. It don’t stand to reason. And I can learn all I don’t know.”

“Not in my office,” said Mr. Catherwood. “There are some things a boy must learn well in school, or he loses his chances in after-life.”

“I write good enough,” said Billy, sullenly.

“But you don’t speak *well* enough,” said Mr. Catherwood. “I thought you’d suit me, Thorn, but I have my doubts now; you had no business to knock that boy down in my office.”

“Yes, he did!” whined Billy, putting his hands to his left side,—it had been the right side before,—“And he’d have jumped on me, if you hadn’t come in. You’re hard on me, sir, but I always will say that you saved my life.”

Mr. Catherwood knit his bushy brows, but there was a faint twinkle in his eyes.

"Where did you go to school?" he asked of Jasper.

"I go to St. Clare's."

"That settles it," Mr. Catherwood said. "I might have forgiven a hasty blow. But, if Mr. William John Patcher is the best boy in that school, any other boy from it can have no place in my office."

"I'll not tell tales out of school," said Jasper, "but just try me. St Clare's is a splendid school, and, although I am not the best boy by a long sight, I'm sure I'm not ashamed of my writing."

Mr. Catherwood pointed to a small black-board set in the wall of the office; it had been used by a former tenant for memoranda of stocks.

"Write some lines there; you must have been taught to memorize poetry at school."

Billy protested. "No, we weren't," he said, "I never learned any. It's not my fault, if my mother kept me home; it's not much of a school, anyhow."

Jasper thought for a moment; then he wrote in a clear hand, with strict attention to punctuation,—

“Whither, 'midst falling dew,
While glow the Heavens with the last steps of day,
Far through their rosy depths dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?”

“That’s from William Cullen Bryant’s
‘Waterfowl’,” said Mr. Catherwood, and he
murmured :

“Vainly the fowler’s eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.”

“Good, Thorn ; I’ll try you, but don’t use
your fists here. Your spelling has saved you.
As for you, Master Patcher, you’d better go
back to school. Boys like you would injure
the reputation of the best school in the world ;
—you ought to have been turned out long
ago.”

Billy slunk to the door ; Mr. Catherwood
went rapidly into the inner office.

“You think you’re in it, Jasper Thorn,”
whispered Billy, “but you’re not ; I’ll settle
you for chousing me out of the place Smarty
Gibbons got for me,—you look out !”

Jasper was too happy to pay any attention to

his words ; he remembered them afterwards. There was a brush on the baize-covered table near him ; he picked it up and began to dust the chairs, on which some chalk-dust from the blackboard had fallen. Billy opened the door again, and called out,

“ Supe ! ”

Jasper went on with his dusting, though he would have enjoyed a tussle with the disappointed and malignant Billy. One question filled his mind ;—how could Billy Patcher be so wicked and malicious and still go to confession ? Jasper did not know that Billy stayed away from church whenever he could play what the boys called “ a sneak game.” Billy’s face, as he looked in the door, seemed really devilish,—and Jasper suddenly asked himself whether he had done right to strike him. Billy stuck his head through the doorway again, and Jasper was tempted to hit at him. But he restrained himself—and turned his back, though he heard Billy whisper, “ Sneak, girly, girly, supe ! ”

In fact, Billy, who had never controlled his temper in his life, was wild with rage and disap-

pointment, and Jasper's seeming indifference made him all the more angry. He rushed into the office and hit Jasper a sharp blow in the back, striking on the way the tip of Jasper's elbow. Jasper could scarcely keep from howling with pain; he caught sight of a heavy Mexican onyx paper-weight on the table and griped it, turning suddenly. If he had thrown it, it would have killed Billy, for Jasper's aim had always been accurate, and tennis and baseball had trained his muscles. He did not throw it, however, the "Hail Mary" rose in his heart,—"Pray for us *now*!" He had said it so often, and it came to him without an effort. He laid the paper-weight on the table, though his blood seemed to boil. There is nothing that makes us so wrathful as a blow in the back. Billy slammed the door, and Jasper saw no more of him that day.

Mr. Catherwood was busy until nearly three o'clock. He took no notice of Jasper; he gave orders, dictated letters, and sent out messages almost without intermission. Jasper's heart sank as he heard. The time would never come when he could do such wonderful things.

Suddenly Mr. Catherwood rushed into the outer office with a bank book in his hand, stuffed out until it seemed quite fat ; he thrust it into a big envelope and sealed it up.

"Thorn," he said, hastily, "go at once to the National Park Bank. Open the envelope when you get there and give the book and what's in it to the receiving teller,—go !—it's late now !"

Without giving Jasper a chance to say a word, he shot back into his office and closed the door. Jasper, who was obedient, went into the street. After he had gone, Mr. Catherwood doubted for a moment the wisdom of sending a new boy out with so much money. He had done it on the impulse of the moment, realizing that in a few minutes the bank would be closed, and he the next day would be a *dies non*,—that is, there would be no bank open. He consoled himself with the belief that Jasper was thoroughly honest, if a little hot-tempered. He was a good judge of human faces, and he had not as yet been deceived by anybody he had trusted. It was nearly train time ; he wanted to get out to Rosedale, his country house, so he dismissed his doubts.

Jasper remembered to have seen the National Park Bank as he came down ; he recalled the fact that it was near a resplendent drug-store, which announced all sorts of tempting soda-water in its window. He had heard a man say as he passed it, "There's the old *Herald* office ; —that building on the corner." He pushed along Broadway as fast as he could, elbowing his way through the hurrying stream of people. There were many boys and men with bank books in their hands rushing along ; he did not realize, until he had gone two blocks, that he had turned south, instead of north. He turned his steps and dashed back along Broadway at a pace that attracted the attention of the policeman he passed. He did not stop ; he heard three o'clock strike. Five minutes more brought him to the bank ; the door was closed ; the last man had gone in. This seemed a great misfortune to Jasper ; he went back to the office as soon as he could ; he saw Billy Patcher standing on the corner talking to an apple-woman.

"Bank closed !" Billy said, looking at the envelope which Jasper held. "Well, Mr.

Catherwood's gone, too ; you can't get into the office."

Jasper paid no attention to him ; but he heard Billy say to the old apple-woman, in a spiteful voice,—

"There goes a sneak !"

Jasper ought not to have minded this ; but it added to his unhappiness. What would Mr. Catherwood think ? Perhaps he might lose his place for being late at the bank ! Full of forebodings, Jasper climbed the stairs, and knocked at the office-door. There was no answer. He knocked again. A young man put his head out of a door opposite.

"What want?" he asked. "Don't make such a racket ! Catherwood's people went fifteen minutes ago,—closed up ! Thought it might be a message for me."

He did not wait for an answer, but drew in his head. Jasper sat on the top step. What should he do ? he did not know Mr. Catherwood's address, and here was all this money in his hands. He rose and opened the door of the opposite office.

"Where does Mr. Catherwood live ?" he

called out, in what he thought was a manly voice.

“Somewhere in the country!” the young man yelled out.

Jasper buttoned the bank book under his jacket and went to the drug-store. He knew that there was likely to be a city directory in the drug-store. This particular drug-store was a temple of soda water in all its forms. Jasper was dazzled by the magnificent fountain from which hot chocolate and frozen sherbets and all kinds of delicious drinks appeared to come. He had only to ask for a directory, for luxuries were not for him. He looked for Mr. Catherwood’s name; it was in the book, but accompanied only with his office address.

A man waiting near him was struck by the look of disappointment on his face.

“Were you looking for anything in particular?” he asked.

“Yes—the address of Mr. Catherwood the broker.”

“The Wall Street man? Yes! Let me see. Oh, yes,—it’s Rosedale,—’way up in Connecticut.”

The man buried himself in the directory and Jasper, after thanking him, went out into the crowded street, where everything bore that appearance of cheerfulness which precedes a legal holiday in New York.

There was nothing for Jasper to do but to go home, with the precious packet pressed close to his chest. His reflections were not pleasant. And yet he had done his best. He was sure God would ask no more from him ;—but then, as Jasper said to himself, God was so much more reasonable than any man ; and it appeared to him as if Mr. Catherwood could be very stern.

Jasper felt that he must go home as soon as possible. As he hurried up Broadway, Billy Patcher joined him.

“Say,” he said, “ain’t we lucky ? No school to-day because the roof’s being fixed, and no school to-morrow because it’s a holiday. What have you got under your jacket ? Something good ?”

“I don’t want to talk to you, Billy Patcher,” Jasper said, “you are not the kind of boy I want to associate with.”

Billy whistled and looked at Jasper sharply.

"Oh," he said, still keeping up with Jasper, "there's a little stand where they sell chocolate squares,—come and treat, Thorn, and we'll make up."

"I have no money," Jasper answered, shortly. "And I wouldn't treat if I had."

"You wouldn't set 'em up, if you had?" said Billy, mimicking Jasper. "You wouldn't, wouldn't you? Sneak-baby!"

And Billy shot across Broadway, barely dodging a car. Jasper clasped the precious book more tightly and kept on his way.

Jasper thought that home had never seemed so pleasant as on this afternoon. The sunlight, reddened from the west, filled the dining-room; on the table were Celia's faded roses, surrounded by a few sprays of ivy which Mrs. Thorn had picked up in her walk. She met him with a smiling face.

"You are early, dear?" she said, kissing him. "It is fortunate that I hurried a little,—I have just got home. I made my visit to the church and prayed hard for your success. You must have a cup of tea before you talk; you must be tired."

"Tired?" said Jasper, laughing. "Why, mother, you know that I have often ridden Corsair for *miles* of an afternoon and think of the Rugby games! It is only the ladies that must have tea at five o'clock in the afternoon,—but I'll have a hunk of bread, if you don't mind, mother?"

"A hunk of bread?" repeated Mrs. Thorn, reproachfully.

"I beg pardon, mother!—I've so much to tell you!"

"And I have a letter for you, Jasper."

"A letter!" cried Jasper. "Oh, mother, suppose it should be from papa, telling us that he wasn't dead at all!"

"Jasper! Jasper!" said his mother, softly. "God's will be done!"

"Oh, of course, I know it couldn't be! But there's nobody that would write to me, except Ben Moran, and he will not;—why, it's from Aunt Katharine!"

Jasper opened the letter; as he did so, several bank-notes fell upon the table. Aunt Katharine, writing on very thin paper, headed the Hotel Metropole, Paris, merely said:

"*Dear Nephew*: I find some American money among my things; it is of no use to me, so I send it to you. You will find a hundred dollars enclosed. Do as you please with it.

"YOUR AUNT KATHARINE."

"Oh, my! Oh, glory!" exclaimed Jasper. "Isn't it 'sroomish,' as Celia would say. May I do as I please with it, mother?"

"Certainly," said his mother, gravely, as she cut his bread, "it's yours."

Jasper forgot the bank book and danced about the room. "It's sroomisher and scroomisher! It's splendiferous! Hold all this, mother!" he said, remembering the bank book and putting it down on the table, with all the money, except one twenty-dollar bill,—Aunt Katharine's gift consisted of five twenty-dollar bills.

Mrs. Thorn did not detain him, for she had a great deal of confidence in Jasper. She put the bank book and the folded bills into the china-closet and carefully spread the butter on Jasper's bread just as he liked it.

Jasper did not remain out long. In less than half an hour he returned with a great bunch

of roses, several boxes of sardines, a bag of oranges, and a little pot of cream.

“And I am going to buy you a new frock, mother!” he said, as he kissed her. “Only think I am going to earn four dollars a week. I have a place, mother,—that is, if being late for the bank does not make me lose it.”

His mother was inclined to lecture him on his extravagance, but he gave her no chance; he plunged into his story and she had to listen.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MISSING BANK BOOK.

MRS. THORN rejoiced in Jasper's good fortune. Four dollars a week was not a great sum. A few months before this she would have regarded it as a mere trifle ;—but Jasper, her boy, could earn it himself ! This changed its aspect completely. It gave her a heart pang to think that he must work instead of studying, but there was a joy in the knowledge that he had begun to make his way in the world. She was more cheerful than usual over Jasper's repast, and as soon as he had talked everything over with her, he was as light as a bird.

“ You could have done nothing else,” she said, in answer to his doubts about the bringing of the bank book home. “ Mr. Catherwood will not be uneasy about his money because he no doubt thinks that it is in the bank. We

will keep it safe, and on the day after to-morrow, you can go at once and deposit it."

"But suppose we should lose it, mother!" said Jasper.

His mother smiled. "No danger; you can put it under your pillow to-night;—if the house burns down, you can run out with your precious treasure and leave me!"

"Oh, mother," said Jasper, smiling, "do you think that I would *ever* leave you even for Mr. Catherwood's money?"

"It will be safe enough, my dear," she said, and she carefully found a new place for it. She hid the envelope and the money Aunt Katharine had sent under the cover of the sideboard.

"There!" she said. "I will put this big white tureen on the spot, and everything will be safe!"

Jasper was relieved.

"How nice it is to have you think for me, dear little mother," he said, putting his cheek against hers, "how nice it is!"

Mrs. Thorn put her arms about his neck; tears came to her eyes, but there was great joy

in her heart that God had spared this dear boy to her. She looked into his frank, loving eyes and said to herself, in the words of Blanche of Castile,—“I wish that he may die rather than commit a mortal sin !”

“Oh, let us take a little walk, mother,” Jasper said, “let us go up to Union Square ;—everything is bright and gay there,—and I’ll buy you a new bonnet.”

“My bonnet will do very well. And even if it were not so good, I could make one myself ;—I intend to trim a hat for Celia ;—the one she wears to Mass is so shabby.”

“You are good ! You are very good, little mammy !” said Jasper. “I believe that you will try to make my caps after awhile.”

“I think I might,” said his mother, as they walked downstairs. “There is only one thing I couldn’t learn to do,—cut your hair. No matter how poor we become, I shall always leave that to the barber.”

Billy Patcher watched them as they went, hand in hand, towards Broadway. Celia McGonigle passed him, carrying a pitcher of milk and a loaf of bread.

“Stuck-up sneak-baby!” Billy muttered.

“I’d like to know who you are talking to!” exclaimed Celia. “I’d just like to know! For three cents I’d smash this pitcher over your head and jam the bread down your throat.”

“You couldn’t afford it! Oh, it’s you, Ceel!” Billy answered. “I wasn’t talking to you; I was speaking of that proud, nasty Thorn there! He’s just as poor as a pauper, and he holds his head higher than Vanderbilt.”

“You just let him alone!” cried Celia, her eyes flashing. “He’s kind as he can be; he gave me a dollar and Monkey a dollar a little while ago, and he bought oranges and gave little Tony ten cents;—I don’t call that poor!” added Celia, triumphantly.

“I’d like to know where he got the money; he must have stolen it!” said Billy, maliciously.

“He has money,” said Celia, “he had a twenty-dollar bill changed in Browne’s store,—Molly Browne told me so; he’s no pauper, Billy Patcher,—pauper yourself!”

“Don’t you sass me!” said Billy Patcher. “I don’t want to lick a girl, because if I did

the whole neighborhood would be down on me,—but I'll punch your brothers and Monkey till they can't stand when I catch 'em !”

“You will, will you?” said Celia. “And what will they be doing? You just let Jasper Thorn and his mother alone, Billy,—you just let 'em alone. Mrs. Thorn is one of the best women that ever lived. She's like an angel to me. She makes me want to be good, and I think ‘Hail Marys’ whenever I look at her. And her home is just like Heaven,” added Celia, with a sigh. “You ought to see it, Bill,—but I don't suppose she'll ever ask the likes of you there,—you ought to see it. There's a carved sideboard and a *beautiful* table-cloth and flowers,—oh, it's just scroomish,—it's goringerous,—it's propingunous !”

Celia could find no other adjective.

“I'll see what it is like, whether she asks me or not,” said Billy.

Billy's curiosity was excited. So Jasper had money ! That was strange,—for he knew that he seemed not to want to spend a cent at the shop on the opposite street from the school. Billy determined to find out whether these

Thorns were rich or not. He went to the back of the house, and, with the help of two iron spikes that had been driven into the wall, easily reached the fire-escape. Monkey Angliori was sitting on the ground just beneath it, chewing a handful of popcorn which filled his mouth.

“Where are you going?” Monkey asked.

Billy made no reply; he ascended the iron steps.

“He is going to Jasper Thorn’s,” Monkey said to himself. “Don’t you go!” he called out. “Mrs. Thorn likes people to come in by the door;—there’s nobody at home.”

Billy went on, although he understood Monkey’s protests, spoken in a strange mixture of English and Italian, very well. Monkey watched him trying to unfasten the slight catch on the window. This he accomplished by violently shaking the under sash. The catch moved and Billy entered the little dining-room of the Thorns.

“Here’s richness!” he said, examining the furniture in the fading light. “No wonder Thorn puts on airs;—but I guess that they haven’t much money,—broken down swells

seldom have much money. I'd like to know where he got that twenty-dollar note !”

Billy lit a match, and lit a small piece of candle ; he was engaged in examining everything he could find when he heard a voice from below calling out,—

“ Billy Patcher ! I say,—Billy Patcher !”

Billy went to the window and began to descend in fear and trembling. Perhaps a policeman was calling ! It was not a policeman ; it was a boy, in the uniform of a district telegraph messenger.

“ Are you Billy Patcher ?” he asked. “ This kid,” pointing to baby, “ says you are.”

“ Yes, I am. What do you want ?”

“ William Patcher ?”

“ Yes.”

“ Well, sign this slip,—I suppose there's no answer. I had a hard time in finding you. The message came to us by telephone—from Rosedale. I went to your house ; nobody at home ;—if I hadn't heard this Eyetalian kid calling out ‘ Billy Patcher,’ I shouldn't have found you.”

Billy read the message. “ Find Jasper

Thorn, and tell him to send the bank book to me by express to Rosedale at once. I realized, when I reached the train, that he was too late for the bank."

This message was from Mr. Catherwood, who had Billy's address.

"No answer?"

"Yes,—say 'All right.—W. Patcher.'"

The message boy walked off.

Billy's eyes sparkled. "I'll get him into a nice scrape before I am done with him. He had money, hadn't he!—a twenty-dollar note! I guess he stole it. I'll fix him."

In the meantime, Mrs. Thorn and Jasper had been enjoying their walk. They felt happier than they had for many a day.

"Besides, mother," said Jasper, "I will study at home. I am determined to stick to Spanish; some day I may be able to go to Matanzas and find out something about dear father and the plantation."

"It will be so hard to study at home," said Mrs. Thorn, "and then you will be tired at night. And, oh, Jasper, I should be so disappointed if you should grow up like some boys

I know,—boys who think that the one aim in life is to get enough money to live upon and to amuse themselves. If you do not learn to love good books,—if you do not improve your mind, you will be so entirely unlike your father.”

“I would not want him to come back and be ashamed of me,” said Jasper. “But, worse than that would be to meet him in Heaven and have him feel that I had not done my best.”

“You will meet him in Heaven, dear,” his mother said gently, “but there will be no reproaches there. Still, how will you be able to study and work, too?”

“Mr. Catherwood is a nice man, mother ;—perhaps, if he sees that I am in earnest, he will give me something to do which will help me to learn. Do you know, mother, now that I must leave school, I begin to see how precious school hours are,—I wish I could make other boys,—who have been grumbling at their lessons perhaps this very day,—feel as I feel. They’d make every minute tell! But come, mother, let us be cheerful ;—please God, I’ll succeed. You’ll be proud of me, and, when father comes back——”

“Jasper !”

“I can’t think of him as being dead, mother, —I can’t ;—but I know it is foolish.”

As he spoke, there came along the street a weary-looking man, with a large bundle. Anybody accustomed to city life would have recognized him as a tailor carrying home a bundle of clothes to be made. A little boy, rosy-cheeked and bright-eyed, trotted beside him, laden with another bundle. The little fellow held his father’s hand in his little fist, while the bundle threatened every moment to drop from his right arm.

Jasper’s eyes filled with tears.

“Oh, mother !” he said.

“I know what you are thinking of, Jasper,” his mother said, gently, “you wish you could help your father as that little boy is doing.”

“Yes.”

“You can help him, Jasper ;—every prayer you utter is a sweet balm to him, and to all the souls in Purgatory ;—and, if he were alive, as you are so fond of thinking, your prayers would help other poor souls.”

“That is a great deal,” said Jasper. “But,

oh, I wish I could walk beside him and take his hand," he added, looking wistfully after the little boy.

Mrs. Thorn could hardly keep back her tears. It seemed to her, as she saw Jasper's glance rest on the retreating figures, that it was far better that he should be with his own mother than in the enjoyment of all Aunt Katharine's luxuries. Still, she began to repine, and to ask herself why she had to suffer so much.

"After all, mother," Jasper said, "we have so much to be thankful for. It is pleasant to think that I had such a good father and that I loved him so much when he was alive."

Mrs. Thorn sighed.

"Oh, I am not ungrateful, dear child ;—but we were so happy, all of us. I don't think that there can be any greater suffering than mine."

"Oh, don't say that, mother,—you have *me*, haven't you ? Be comforted, mother."

But Mrs. Thorn shook her head ; she was not comforted.

"No, Jasper, it is no use ;—I try to feel cheerful, but I cannot. No worse thing can

come to us,—that is the only consolation I have.”

Jasper’s heart sank ; he could endure anything when his mother was cheerful.

“ Well, mother,—things might be worse. I am sure of one thing ;—I shall be happy as long as I have you.”

A little later Mrs. Thorn remembered this conversation.

In the twilight the mother and son went up to their rooms. Celia met them on the second landing.

“ I thought I’d tell you, Mrs. Thorn,” she said, “ that Billy Patcher was in your house this evening,—I saw him going up the fire-escape.”

“ That boy is very cheeky ! ” exclaimed Jasper. “ I’ll tell the police officer, if he tries that again ! ”

Celia ran off, rather pleased with this announcement, for she was not fond of Billy Patcher.

The mother and son entered their little home. Jasper felt as if a dark cloud had blotted out all the brightness that had filled his life a little

while before. As he lit the gas, he resolved to be cheerful, in spite of anything that might happen. It was somewhat chilly, and he put a match to the wood in the grate before his mother could remonstrate. The flame burnt up brightly, and was reflected in the plate glass of the side-board.

"I thought I closed that door," Mrs. Thorn said. She went to the side-board, where a few pieces of her best dinner-set were kept.

"Jasper!" she said, in a weak voice. "Oh, Jasper!"

Jasper, who had been bending over the fire, hurried to her. She had raised the white-and-gold tureen in her hands and stood looking at the empty shelf beneath it.

"Oh, dear child," she moaned, "the bank book is gone!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SPANIARD.

THE bank book had disappeared, and so had Jasper's money. The mother and son searched for them until after midnight. Earlier in the evening, they sent for Celia, to ask her again whether Billy Patcher had actually gone into the house or not. But Celia, frightened by Mrs. Thorn's evident agitation, could only remember that she had seen him on the steps of the fire-escape.

"We cannot prove that Billy Patcher took the bank book," said Mrs. Thorn, pale and weary. "Oh, if it had been only Aunt Katharine's money! If it had only been our own!"

"He was here; he is a bad boy," said Jasper. "I am sure he took it. I will have him arrested in the morning."

"But you have no proof."

"Why, mother, I am *sure* he did it."

"Who will believe you?—Celia cannot swear that he entered our house. If you have him arrested without proof, you will suffer the penalty of the law yourself."

"Mother," said Jasper, "it seems to me that we were almost happy a few minutes ago."

"I see it now," said his mother, crying softly; "I see that I ought to have been content. There are misfortunes worse than death. And this is one of them. Mr. Catherwood will call you a-a-a-thief!"

Jasper shivered.

His mother put her arms around him, and, kneeling by his side, wept aloud.

Jasper could not speak or cry; a great lump seemed to close up his throat. The gas flickered, and showed the vacant place in the china-closet where the bank book ought to have been.

"God will not let that happen," Jasper whispered, "there must be some way out."

"The bank book is gone!"

"But God will not let me be sent to prison;—oh, mother, it would kill you!"

"I am afraid it would, Jasper."

Mrs. Thorn forgot that Jasper was only a boy. If he had been a less manly boy,—if he had been more selfish,—he would have broken down utterly, seeing her so crushed and overwhelmed. She forgot that he needed to be cheered even more than she did. But, since her husband's death, only the dark side of things had appeared to her.

"Mother," Jasper said, slowly and with a great effort, "we will go to bed, and trust to God. I don't believe that He will let such a thing happen. But, if He does," and the great lump in Jasper's throat rose to a sob, "I'll go because it will be His will. And you'll believe in me; the only thing that would hurt me would be for *you* not to trust me, mother."

Mrs. Thorn kissed her son, and her tears rained down upon his face.

"But I *am* sure God will not let me go to jail."

Somehow, Mrs. Thorn felt refreshed by the boy's faith.

"But, oh, Jasper;—it will get into the newspapers, and Aunt Katharine——"

“Aunt Katharine will never believe that any boy of her blood can be a thief!” said Jasper, proudly.

The two said the rosary together, Jasper went to sleep ; but Celia, who crept up to the landing,—a strange fear upon her,—heard Mrs. Thorn sobbing as if her heart would break. Celia did not dare to knock at the door ; she waited and listened so long that the dawn broke, and the chill air made her cold ; but, when she turned away, the sobbing had not ceased. She wondered why a woman so fortunate as Mrs. Thorn could be unhappy !

She crept softly downstairs ; Monkey was sleeping peacefully, with a pasteboard box clasped in his hands. Celia took it from him, and tossed it into the closet, where all sorts of rubbish was kept.

“That child picks up all the trash he can find,” she said to herself. Then, tucking Monkey’s quilt in a motherly way, she went to sleep herself and dreamed that she had been able to change Mrs. Thorn’s tears into smiles of joy. In the meantime, the great city began to awaken, and the dreaded daylight

drew nearer to Jasper and his grief-stricken mother.

As soon as Mrs. Thorn had most devoutly said the rosary, she determined to see Billy Patcher. Jasper said that he did not think this of much use. He had not the slightest belief that Billy would tell anything. But Mrs. Thorn argued that, even if Billy were bad enough to take the bank book, he might not be bad enough to bring ruin on innocent people. She got Billy's address from Celia, who wondered at her pale face and sunken eyes, and who longed to comfort her.

Mrs. Thorn found Billy in front of the tenement house in which he lived. He was playing hand-ball with two other boys. Mrs. Thorn called him to her. Billy, with a look of curiosity in his eyes, approached her, not taking off his cap.

"Well, ma'am!" he said.

"I am Mrs. Thorn," she said, "Jasper Thorn's mother."

"Oh!" Billy said, looking still more curious. Then a sullen look came over his face.

"Will you walk to the next corner with

me?" Mrs. Thorn asked. Billy thrust his hands into his pockets and walked doggedly by her side.

"Billy," she said, putting her hand on his shoulder, "if you have done anything wrong, there is time to make amends. Nobody shall know of it;—nobody!"

Billy looked startled.

"Who has been telling!" asked Billy, suspiciously.

"When you go to confession, you will have to tell on yourself——" Mrs. Thorn began.

"I am not going to confession," said Billy. "My father isn't a Catholic, and he doesn't believe in confession;—and mother thinks I do go, but I don't," Billy grinned. "You're not going to get anything out of me, Mrs. Thorn. I ain't so green. I could tell lots, if I wanted to, but I will not."

"Billy," said Mrs. Thorn, stopping, "if you will return the bank book, Jasper will let you keep the notes."

"The bank book?" said Billy, his face lighting up. "How am I to know anything about a bank book?"

"You do know something about Mr. Catherwood's bank book,—Jasper had it yesterday."

"It's gone, is it?" said Billy.

"And you took it!" answered Mrs. Thorn, grasping his arm.

Billy laughed.

"Did I? Prove it."

"You were in our rooms yesterday when we were out!"

"Prove it!" said Billy. "So the book is gone. And Jasper says I took it. A-ah! I'll fix Jasper. My opinion is that he took the money out of the bank book, to spend it. He had no money coming home from work;—I know *that*, because he wouldn't buy chocolate squares. If he had had money, he would have spent some of it. But he did spend money later,—lots of it! People in the neighborhood know he did! You can give me to the cops, if you like,—*I* don't care. But he'll be the one to go to jail. Everybody about here can prove that he had a twenty-dollar note after he came home. So he blames me for stealing, does he? He'd better look out! Hand me over to the police,—do! See who'll go to jail!"

Mrs. Thorn's heart sank ; she clasped her hands, almost in despair. Her fears were aroused ; she was horrified at the bold position assumed by this boy. She had not even dreamed that there could be such a bad boy in the world.

"If you do not tell the truth, Billy," she said, "you will ruin Jasper, and kill me."

"You just make Jasper tell the truth. Don't you come preaching to me, ma'am. He's in a scrape. And it serves him right. He did me out of the place Smarty Gibbons got for me ;—I'll tell Mr. Catherwood the whole story to-morrow,—and we'll see who'll come out right,—your stuck-up, pious son or me !"

Mrs. Thorn still held him by the arm.

"You took the bank book !"

"I did not !" said Billy.

"I have heard that this is not the first time you have lied——"

"Your son tells you so ! All right !—we'll see who Mr. Catherwood will believe."

Mrs. Thorn looked at Billy's angry face. She

could not believe that any child could be so depraved.

"I will go to your mother!" she said.

Billy laughed, and shook himself free from her grasp.

"Ma will not believe that I am a liar and a thief because *you* say so. Oh, no! Besides, she has gone to spend the day in Jersey City. You can tell her when she comes home, if you like. *I don't care!*"

Mrs. Thorn wondered whether he was telling the truth or not.

"I will go to find her," she said. She approached him, and grasped his arm; he shook himself loose, and disappeared behind a huge truck which was just passing. Mrs. Thorn turned and entered the tenement-house in which Billy lived. A woman was standing with a baby in her arms, in the hall.

"Does Mrs. Patcher live here?" Mrs. Thorn asked.

"On the third floor, ma'am," answered the woman, "but she do be visiting her cousin to-day. You'll find her son out in the street."

Mrs. Thorn thanked her.

“Ah, dear,” said the woman to herself, “it’s a sorrowful face the lady has.” And then aloud, “Can I do anything for you, ma’am?”

“No—no—thank you!” answered Mrs. Thorn, going out with a heavy heart.

“You’re a lady, ma’am,” said the woman, “and I judge by your voice an educated one; it’s myself that has little education, though I’ve tried to be a lady all my life. But it is not of myself I’m thinking. There’s a dago man upstairs, and I can’t understand him. He is a sailor; and he’s been sick. He almost fainted in church, and my husband brought him home last Sunday. He’s as gentle as a lamb with the children, and he pays for all he gets. But we can’t understand him, and he seems to have something on his mind.

“I speak a little Italian,” said Mrs. Thorn, interested by the woman’s kindly face.

“Oh, he’s not Eyetalian; he is some other kind.”

“Then I am afraid I cannot be of use.”

“Oh, just step upstairs a moment!”

Mrs. Thorn followed the woman and the baby up the stairs.

They paused on the second floor, and Mrs. Thorn was politely ushered into a room furnished as a parlor. There were cheap lace curtains and a red velvet sofa. On this sofa sat an olive-skinned man, who looked as if he had just recovered from a fit of sickness.

"Dago—speakee lady," the woman said, with a smile; it was evidently her impression that she was speaking a foreign language.

"I am a Spaniard," the man said, shaking his head helplessly. *Yo no entiende, Señora.*"

"He is Spanish," Mrs. Thorn said. "I am afraid I cannot be of any use. My little son has begun to study Spanish. I will send him to see you some day."

"Do!" answered the woman. "I think we may make him speak. I don't see why he does not understand me. Are you deaf? Are you deaf, I say? My baby can understand that! Why no speakee?"

She turned with a gesture of despair to Mrs. Thorn. "I give it up. Foreigners are as stupid as owls."

Mrs. Thorn could not help smiling.

"Will you please ask Mrs. Patcher, when

she comes home, if she will call at my home, with her son?"

"That I will," the good-natured woman answered, "but I don't believe that she'll be able to bring her boy. He's as headstrong as a mule, and she has little control over him. When your son comes, tell him to ask for Mrs. Corcoran. I'm Mrs. Corcoran."

Mrs. Thorn patted the plump baby on the cheek. She was somehow cheered by the kindness of the woman. As she left the room, the Spaniard fumbled in his pocket and drew out an envelope. Mrs. Thorn did not observe the movement. The Spaniard shook his head, and replaced the paper. It would have made a great difference, if Mrs. Thorn had seen it. But she went into the street, with the weight of her new misfortune upon her;—and the world seemed altogether dark.

Mrs. Corcoran said good-bye, and watched her until she was out of sight.

"It's not only the poor that suffer," she said, taking her baby on the other arm and preparing to go to the opposite grocery shop. "The ladies that can afford their silks have their own

trials ;—and yet Celia McGonigle says that her house is like a parlor !”

Mrs. Thorn walked past her own home several times ; she could not meet Jasper at once.

When she did go up to her rooms, she found the boy beside his bed, kneeling, with his beads in his hands. He jumped up eagerly.

“ Will he give it up ?” he asked.

“ No,” answered his mother, with an effort, “ he says he did not take it.”

Jasper frowned ; then he drew a deep breath.

“ I suppose I’ll have to stand it, mother ;—but you believe in me !”

“ With all my heart, dear boy !”

“ I have been praying ever since you left, mother. St. Anthony will surely help me to find it.”

“ I hope so ;—we must pray with all our might !”

“ Ah, I wish I had that bank book in my hand !—how I would grip it !”

“ We were so happy yesterday !”

Jasper remembered his mother’s complaints during their walk. He was too respectful to

remind her of them ; but mothers can read their sons' faces, and she read his.

"I know what you are thinking of, Jasper ;—yes, I know. Oh, if I had known yesterday how much reason I had to be happy, I should have been more cheerful. To think what the night brought forth !"

"Mother," said Jasper, "cheer up. God will help us ; I am innocent ;—and I know that He sees a door open when all doors seem closed to us. He sees that door now ;—and we don't see it."

A knock sounded at the door. Before Mrs. Thorn could open it, she heard Celia's voice.

"There's a policeman coming upstairs," she whispered. "If Jasper has broken a window anywhere, tell him to hide."

"Billy Patcher has accused you !" exclaimed Mrs. Thorn, hiding her face with her hands.

The heavy tramp,—regular, and almost military,—of a policeman was heard on the steps.

"Well," said Jasper, perspiration coming out on his forehead, "let them take me,—it's horrible, mother ; bear up !—let him take me ;—God knows I am innocent, and He will show it !"

CHAPTER XIV.

SUSPENSE.

CELIA called out again,—“ Hide ! ”

Jasper stood still ; he leaned against the mantelpiece, for he felt very weak.

He saw in his mind a horrible picture—a dark, damp prison ; he seemed to feel the grip of the policeman on his shoulder. What he really saw was his mother’s white face, drawn with suffering ; he forgot himself, and put his arms around her neck.

“ Don’t look that way, mother,” he said.
“ Don’t ! ”

Celia put herself in front of the policeman, and said,—

“ Whatever it is, he didn’t do it, good man. Don’t arrest him ! ”

The policeman allowed his official dignity to relax.

“ What’s all this row ? I am not going to

arrest anybody. Don't be afraid, ma'am," said the policeman, his face suddenly assuming an expression of great good-humor. "I took the trouble to come up here to you because I found this letter in the street." He held out Aunt Katharine's letter. "As I had to find out why the front door of this house was left open last night, I thought I'd warn you to take better care of your things. That's all."

The policeman turned away before Mrs. Thorn could thank him. Celia, much relieved, began to dance in the corridor.

"I'm so glad," she said; "when a policeman comes, it always means trouble. Oh, I'm so glad! But you are having some trouble, I know."

"Yes, child, we are having trouble,—great trouble."

"I wish that I could help you,—I only wish I could!" said Celia, wistfully.

"You can pray for us, Celia. We have no one to look to but God."

"You have always taught me to believe that He would help us," spoke up Jasper, suddenly reviving now that the danger was over.

“Don’t you remember the verses you taught me, from Father Faber,

“ ‘ For Right is Right, since God is God,
And Right the day must win ;
To doubt would be disloyalty,
To falter would be sin.’ ”

And let us hope, mother !” Jasper flushed somewhat, as he remembered that Celia was present ; it might seem to her as if he were preaching, and boys are very much afraid of seeming to preach. Celia saw, with natural tact, that the Thorns would prefer to be alone.

Jasper saw that he must not let his mother become despondent. If he had been dependent on her, no doubt he would have thought more of himself. Probably, if sorrow had not come to him, he would have been selfish and what people call “spoiled.” The Scripture,—(which you young people do not read often enough),—says that it is good for a man to bear the yoke when he is young ; all play and no work makes us selfish.

Jasper would have been inclined, like most boys, to be selfish. When he was little, he had thought much of himself. He often re-

membered how proudly he had worn his first pair of trousers on Broadway, and expected even the street-car drivers to stop their horses, to look at him. He had learned not to expect so much attention now.

Celia had left, on her tiptoes,—the only thing she could think of doing as a mark of respect to her friends. Mrs. Thorn covered her face with her hands. This made Jasper feel very desolate.

“Mother,” he said, “let us be cheerful at any rate. The bank book is gone,—that’s certain; the person that took it no doubt dropped this letter on the sidewalk. I ought to have told the policeman about the robbery.”

“Why didn’t I think of that?” exclaimed Mrs. Thorn. “It would have brought Billy Patcher to justice! But, Jasper, I would not want his mother to suffer as I am suffering now. Let us give him another chance. His mother will bring him here and perhaps he will confess the theft. If she only could make him promise to go to confession.”

“Yes,” said Jasper, “that would make things right. But we shall have to wait.”

"I can't wait," said Mrs. Thorn, "I am too wretched. Oh, I wish Mrs. Patcher would come !"

"We shall have to wait," Jasper said. "And now, mother, while you make some coffee, I'll study my Spanish grammar. It's so hard that I know it will take my mind off this bank book."

Somebody had once told Jasper,—“When you cannot remedy an evil, stop thinking of it.” Jasper had a strong will, and he brought all its force to bear to concentrate himself on the list of nouns and verbs in this chapter of Ollendorf's Spanish grammar. The parrot had made him interest himself in Spanish, and he had found the grammar among some old books belonging to his father.

Mrs. Thorn, seeing her son so calm, grew calmer herself. Jasper knit his brow now and then, and his lips moved rapidly ; he loved languages, but he found it hard to memorize. By the time his mother had asked him to come to luncheon, he had mastered his chapter.

Jasper tried to be as cheerful as possible over the tea and toast and chops. It was hard

work ; he dashed into a description of the restaurant into which Mr. Catherwood had taken him.

“ There was a man in a white cap and coat making griddle-cakes in the front window. And they looked so nice ! There was quite a crowd around him. After we went into the long room, bright with electric lights, a waiter came to the cherry-colored table, and, when I said I’d have griddle-cakes, he called out loudly, ‘ One on ! ’ When the cakes were ready, I heard the cook call out, ‘ One off ! ’ The waiter brought a bright metal pitcher with maple-syrup in it, and a nice pat of butter,—that butter made me think of Red Riding Hood, mother ; it was like the pat she took to her grandmother, don’t you know ? And, with the butter and the maple-syrup, the cakes were delicious ! ”

Jasper talked as fast as he could. For a while his mother seemed to forget her grief ; she even smiled. When the meal was over, Jasper wondered how they would pass the long afternoon.

Much to his relief, Celia knocked at the door.

She came in alone, with a plate, covered by a napkin, in her hands.

“I am not much of a cook, Mrs. Thorn,” she said, as she carefully removed the napkin, and proudly displayed a lumpy-looking mass of yellow and brown; “but I thought you’d like something home-made.”

Jasper’s lips opened, as he saw the cake which Celia displayed as if it were a precious thing. He could hardly keep from laughing.

“Whenever pop isn’t just himself or the boys are not doing just right, I just take a cup o’ tea and some of my own cake. Home-made things may be a little heavy, but they’re your own,” said Celia, proudly. “And that’s something.”

Mrs. Thorn could hardly suppress a smile, as she set the queer-looking cake upon the table. It was plain that Celia was not much of a cook, but her pleased face showed that she was rejoicing in having done her best.

“Do eat some *now*; I’ll cut it! I left Monkey in bed;—I made a little cake for him last night; he ate too much of it, I’m afraid;—he isn’t well this morning.”

“Poor child !” said Mrs. Thorn. “We have just had our luncheon, Celia, so we can’t eat cake at present. It’s a very rich cake, I’m sure.”

“Yes, it is,” said Celia, sitting on the edge of her chair, glowing with pleasure, “I put everything I had into it. You see I kept a receipt for cocoanut cake, which I cut out of the *Herald*. I made it once ;—it was splendid ; the boys all made themselves sick. But part of the receipt was torn off, so I found another about pound cake, and I mixed ’em together. That’s what I brought you. Monkey liked it. Do try it, Mrs. Thorn, it’s the scroomishest cake I ever tasted !”

“Later, my dear,” Mrs. Thorn said.

“Mother,” Jasper said, hoping to divert his mother’s mind, “why don’t you teach Celia how to make some of your nice muffins ? She can do fancy cooking ;—just teach her something plain.”

“Oh, I would so love to make muffins !” exclaimed Celia. “I just would ! It would be corumptious !”

“Thank you, Jasper, for the suggestion,” said Mrs. Thorn. “Come into the kitchen,

Celia. I want you to wash your hands and put on a clean apron."

"They *are* clean," said Celia, looking at her hands, "I've been kneading bread all the morning."

Jasper tried not to laugh.

"Never mind that, Celia,—a cook must wash her hands continually. Come!"

Celia obediently followed Mrs. Thorn. The poor child had known little of a mother's care. She was most anxious to do her duty. It would have been a delight for her to practice the piano pieces which more fortunate little girls object to. And the chance of learning to cook under Mrs. Thorn's direction brought a flush of pleasure to her cheeks.

"I will teach you to make a cake, Celia," Mrs. Thorn said.

Jasper raised his head from his Spanish grammar, to listen to the voice in the kitchen. Celia was actually singing,—

"Sugar and spice,
And all that's nice—"

He heard his mother gently scolding and then giving directions in her sweet, even tone.

“It’s beautiful !” he heard Celia say, after a long pause. “I can really make the icing myself. What will the boys say ? Won’t they be surprised when they taste this cake ? Oh, Mrs. Thorn, do you think I can really make it all alone ?”

“Certainly,” Mrs. Thorn said, “but you must always fancy that I am looking on, and take just as much care as you do now.”

It was plain that Mrs. Thorn had forgotten her sorrow for the moment. Jasper plunged into his work. He had never studied harder in his life. He wrote four exercises, and corrected each one by the Key.

“Study is a blessing !” he said, when, after a struggle with a hard verb, he came to the surface of life again, just as a diver puts his head above water to take a breath of air.

“Dear ! dear !” thought his mother, as she re-entered the dining-room, accompanied by the delighted Celia, who carefully carried a large, iced sponge-cake. “I had entirely forgotten ! It is nearly time for William Patcher and his mother to come.”

Celia held the cake before Jasper in such a funny way that he laughed out loud.

“Oh, I am so happy!” she said, “I’ve learned to do something *right*. I feel like a woman. Your mother has learned me to make soup, too,—soup that you can have on Friday. Just think of it!”

“‘Taught,’ not ‘learned,’” said Mrs. Thorn, gently. “*I teach; you learn.*”

“*You teach; I learn,*” said Celia. “Oh, I see!”

The sponge-cake was very pretty; it had a white flower on it, and three-cornered leaves around its edge. Jasper admired it greatly; and Celia went downstairs singing gayly.

“Well, mother,” said Jasper, “you’ve made one poor soul happy.”

“I begin to see that it is not necessary to be rich in order to make others happy.”

Footsteps were heard outside the door. Before anybody could ring, Mrs. Thorn had opened the door.

Billy Patcher stood on the threshold, with his hands in his pockets and his hat on his head. Behind was his mother; she had a gentle and

sorrowful face ; she wore a rusty black shawl and gown, and a black straw hat. She seemed very timid.

“Go right in, mom !” Billy said. “Make yourself at home. They’re no better than anybody else.”

“Don’t mind him, ma’am,” Mrs. Patcher said. “Billy is just like his father ; he will have his little joke. I will take a chair, ma’am, —thank you, ma’am. I have just come back from Jersey City. It’s a long journey. One of my neighbors said that you wanted to see me.”

“Yes ;—it was kind of you to come,” Mrs. Thorn said, feeling very nervous.

“She says I stole money, mom !” said Billy. “But it was this kid of hers that did it, all the same. You know that I didn’t take the bank book, and you know that you spent a lot of money yesterday !”

Jasper turned his head away. He disliked to look at Billy ; the boy’s face was so full of triumphant hatred.

“Is that what you wanted to see me about ?” asked Mrs. Patcher, timidly. “You must not

be too hard on Billy, lady. He is sometimes a little hard to manage, and he will not go to church regular, but that is his father's fault. His father don't believe in church-going, which is a pity. I'm sure he wouldn't steal. Indeed," added Mrs. Patcher, gathering courage suddenly, "I think it is a great piece of impudence for anybody to call my son a thief!"

"Your son, Mrs. Patcher, was seen on our fire-escape yesterday, and he no doubt entered this room."

"Oh, my son's a burglar, is he, ma'am? How would you like me to call your son a burglar? I may not be a lady with white hands and a flat like a parlor, but I have the feelings of a mother. Don't say that my boy's a thief!" she said, tears coming into her eyes. "He may have been misled;—but don't call him a thief. I can't bear it!"

"Billy," Jasper broke in, "if you did take the bank book, just to annoy me, tell the truth. We will tell nobody,—you shall not go to jail!"

"Oh—o!" laughed Billy. "Go to jail! I guess not! You'll go to jail, after you've lost

your place at Mr. Catherwood's. Go to jail, my boy? Oh—o, no! You'll be wearing a striped suit at Sing-Sing soon yourself!"

Billy put on his cap, which he had taken off for a few minutes, and dug his hands deep into his pockets.

"I didn't say I had no money to treat a fellow to chocolate squares and then go and show a twenty-dollar note, did I? And you want to save yourself, Jasper Thorn, by making me out to be a thief! I'll be even with you! I'll be down at Mr. Catherwood's early to-morrow morning, with my story. Mind that!"

"I hope that you won't think Billy forward,—he was always forward from the time he was a baby,—he cut his first tooth when he was three months old and he walked when he was six months old,—so I hope you won't mind him," said Mrs. Patcher, who seemed bewildered. "Come, Billy. I would like to have you call on me, ma'am, and bring your little boy."

"Her little boy!" sneered Billy. "She'll call on him in jail,—that's what will happen!"

Mrs. Patcher preceded him to the door; he

slammed it viciously, having given this parting shot.

“What a horrid boy!” Mrs. Thorn said.

“Oh, Jasper, how can his mother *live*, and have such a son?”

“She loves him ; she doesn’t see his faults. He’ll be hanged yet,” said Jasper, bitterly. “I did not think that there could be such a bad boy in the world.”

“He may be a bad boy ;—in fact, he seems so,” said Mrs. Thorn, “but I do not believe that he took the bank book.”

Jasper looked at his mother in surprise.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE OFFICE.

“GOOD-BYE, Jasper,” Mrs. Thorn said, as the boy kissed her on the morning of the day which she in her thoughts, called “fatal.” “Whatever happens, I will be happy as long as you are good !”

“Don’t cry, mother,” Jasper said. “Things are never so bad as they seem. And I am not going to let myself be conquered by *anything*. I’m not clever. I’ve always had to study hard to learn anything. I’m not like Ben Moran ; he could look at a book and he seemed to know his lesson. I think I can ride better than most people,—but that is the best thing I can do. I’ve been taught that God helps us, and that prayer can get anything. The Blessed Virgin knows how *you* feel, and you can make up your mind, mother, that she is going to help us out of this scrape. Don’t you worry,

mother. You have Celia up, and give her a cooking-lesson ;—and, when I come home, I'll have good news."

Jasper ran downstairs ; he whistled as loud as he could, for his heart was heavy. A boy,—or a man either for that matter,—cannot bend long under sorrow. If he is healthy, he rebounds, as a hickory sapling thrusts up its head after a pile of snow falls on it. The snow, loosened by the sun, comes thundering down the rocks. It buries the sapling out of sight ; but in a few minutes up comes the sapling, scattering the snow in all directions. Like the sapling, Jasper, as he walked along, began to scatter his snow. The fresh air, the rattle of the elevated cars overhead, the groups of men, girls, and boys on their way to work, amused him.

A boy of about his own age caught the end of a truck. The driver tried to reach him with his long whip, but failed. He drove slowly and tried again ; the boy still hung on and grinned. The shop-girls laughed ; the driver grew angry, but he could not stop his truck in the middle of the street, so he used his whip

frantically, stretching his full length, and striving with all his might. The contest interested everybody greatly and afforded much amusement, until a policeman came in sight. Then the boy jumped down and ran away. Jasper laughed with the rest, for the boy seemed very much like a mischievous monkey. As the boy ran off, Jasper noticed that it was Billy Patcher. He was lost in the crowd. Jasper realized that he would reach Mr. Catherwood's office before him. He had reached the foot of one of the elevated stations. Five cents was a great sum to him ; it was more than he could afford to spend ; but his father had taught him to spend money when it was necessary, but never to waste it. Here was a time when money ought to be spent. It was most important that he should reach Mr. Catherwood's office before Billy Patcher got there. He ran up the steps of the station. The train was approaching. He put his five-cent piece through the little window of the ticket-office ; he was about to drop it into the box when he saw that he had gone up on the wrong side. He should have made sure that he was on the down-town

side ; but he had, in his haste, gone to the up-town station. This was a great mortification to a real New York boy ; it was worse still to think that the mistake helped Billy Patcher to get a better start.

He ran down the steps as quickly as possible. In a few minutes more, he was on the train. It was warm and comfortable ; the seats looked so pleasant and clean ; a girl next to him was talking to another girl in front of her.

“ It will be just lovely ! ” the first girl said. “ We’ll be together on the steamer. Mamma and I will spend the winter in the Riviera.”

“ Think how fortunate we are,” the second girl answered,—she had her hands full of flowers,—“ to escape the cold and snow of a New York winter. It is awful to have to get up so early, to catch the steamer ; but it’s all in a good cause. My mother will come later,—she wants me to look after some things before she comes on board.”

“ Mamma will not come till later,—and papa will not join us to say good-bye until the steamer sails. I really feel as if I had been up all night.”

So the girls chattered across Jasper. It made him sad at first; his heart sank as he contrasted his lot with that of these young girls. How his mother would have enjoyed all the things these girls talked of so carelessly. The one in front of him had half turned, to continue the conversation. She held her pocket-book in the hand that rested on the back of the seat, while with the other hand she showed the mass of flowers which filled the air with rich, unusual perfume.

"They *are* lovely," she said. "The only gardenias and stephanotis in the city. Jack sent them this morning."

Jasper admired the white flowers, too, and began to feel happy again. The young girls laughed much in low tones, and when one of them made a joke, Jasper found himself laughing quite loud.

The girl in front of him smiled; it was *her* joke.

"What a nice, clean-looking boy!" she said.

Jasper flushed. He remembered that he ought not to have listened; but how could he

have helped it? The girls *would* talk. He did not like being called a “nice, clean-looking boy.” Of course he was a clean-looking boy! How could he help being clean-looking when he took a bath every morning, like any gentleman! Jasper turned his head away,—as he did so, the train stopped, and the guard called out something. A man rushed swiftly down the passage between the seats.

“Good gracious!” exclaimed the girl in front. “He has knocked my pocket-book out of my hand!”

But Jasper’s eyes had been quicker than hers. He had seen the man grasp the pocket-book, and, as quickly as possible, he gripped his wrist. The man, with an oath, went on.

“Here’s your pocket-book, ma’am!”

“Oh, you sweet boy!” said the young woman. “Dear me! You caught him before I knew I had lost my money.” The other girl was loud in her expressions of admiration, and several sympathetic passengers joined in. “And our steamship tickets and our letter of credit are all here! What would papa have said if I had lost them?” She opened the

pocket-book and offered Jasper a five-dollar note. "That's not enough, I know," she said, "but it is the only note, except a fifty, in the purse."

Jasper took off his hat.

"Thank you,—but I can't take money. I couldn't help gripping the man's hand."

"Oh, you sweet boy!" said the girl. "You *must* take the money."

"But I can't," said Jasper, getting very red indeed. It was bad enough to have everybody in the car looking at him, but to be called "a sweet boy" was awful! "Oh, I really can't!"

"Then you must have some of my flowers!" she said, impulsively, as she thrust half her bunch of gardenias and stephanotis into his hands. "Now you must. My name is— Oh, here we are, Jenny;—I've got to get off here, and stop at the china store about Carrie's wedding gift. See you on the steamer."

"Oh, I'll go, too, and take a hansom the rest of the way,—mayn't I?" said Jenny. The two girls hurried out of the car and forgot all about "the sweet boy," who sat, flushed and

sheepish, with his hands full of exquisite flowers.

He was determined to hold on to the flowers, and to keep them fresh somehow until he should reach home. Whether his news should be good or bad, the flowers would brighten his mother. He got out at his station and raced swiftly to Mr. Catherwood's office. People thought he was a florist's boy behind time.

The young man with the yellow mustache and gray clothes, whom Mr. Catherwood had called "Herbert," was at his desk.

"Hello!" he said, as Jasper entered, breathless. "So you've come!"

"Has he been here?" asked Jasper. "Don't you believe him! He took the money; *I* didn't, —don't you believe him!"

"He? Who? What? When?" asked the young man. "I want you to stop talking gibberish and get to work. I've got to see some friends off on the City of Paris at noon, and I've come down early."

"Oh," said Jasper, drawing a great breath of relief, "Billy Patcher's not been here then?"

"Billy Patcher? Who's Billy Patcher?"

You must have lost your senses. You go right into the outside office and pile all those schedules neatly on Mr. Catherwood's desk. That'll keep you busy until I want you,—which will be soon! Hurry!"

Jasper went into the office, his heart as heavy as lead. Billy Patcher had not come, but he would come, and in a minute or two; Mr. Herbert would ask about the bank book. Nothing could save him! The scent of the flowers,—he had laid them on a big chair in front of Mr. Catherwood's desk,—seemed to bring a vague comfort. "Well," he said to himself, "I have done no wrong,—none! God will find out a way, though I don't see how He can;—but I *know* He can."

He went to work to place the schedules neatly in a corner of the desk.

"I say, Thorn," Mr. Herbert said, coming into the office (Jasper turned at the sound of his voice and became deadly pale), "you just stamp our name on the back of all these circulars. Hello! Where did you get the flowers?"

"A lady gave them to me."

"A lady? Hello! Gardenia and stephanotis. Why, they're my flowers. I didn't think anybody could get them in New York, except myself, just now."

"A lady nearly lost her pocket-book in the L train, and I happened to save it; so she gave me these flowers."

"They are exquisite. We must find some water for them. There's a big glass,—fill it." Jasper obeyed. "They'll last now. Was it a young woman?"

"Yes, sir,—a very young one, with light hair; she was going to the steamer, to go abroad to-day."

"Hello!" said Mr. Herbert, smiling. "So you saved her pocket-book and she gave you those;—cheeky, I must say, when I spent ten dollars for the whole bunch. She might just as well have given you five dollars at once!"

"She offered it to me."

"Oh!—and you preferred the flowers! Good taste! Good boy! That was Miss Catherwood, and I'll scold her for giving my flowers away."

"Oh, don't, sir," said Jasper, "she kept a

great many, and she seemed proud of them, too."

Jasper was uneasy ; it was too bad to get Miss Catherwood into trouble.

Mr. Herbert smiled. " Well, take 'em home ; I'm glad they fell to somebody that likes flowers, anyhow. Go on with your work."

Another respite ! Mr. Herbert went to the other desk, and began to make rapid calculations on a sheet of paper.

The door opened abruptly.

Jasper raised his head. Billy Patcher, red and breathless, tumbled into the room.

" Ah, I've caught you, have I ? Where's Mr. Catherwood ?"

" Who asks for Mr. Catherwood in that way ?" asked Mr. Herbert. " You ought to learn manners, whoever you are !"

" There's a thief !" Billy said, pointing to Jasper. " I 'spose he's told you I took the bank book ! Well, it's a lie ! He took it himself, and spent the money, and he and his precious mother tried to throw the blame on me. You just send for a policeman and the truth will come out !"

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Herbert. "Are you the boy that tried to take Miss Catherwood's pocket-book? Is this the boy, Thorn?"

"No, sir," said Jasper, in a low voice. "But I'm not a thief. My aunt sent me the money."

"His aunt!" screamed Billy. "It's all in my eye! His aunt! Hokey-pokey! He is just fooling you! You can send him to jail to-day. I'll fill his place! Carthim right off!"

"Whose aunt?" demanded Mr. Herbert, standing up. "What money?"

"I didn't take the money, sir. You can send me to jail, if you will,—but," added Jasper, with a sob, "it will break mother's heart."

"He didn't care much whether he broke my mother's heart or not,—trying to make a burglar of me. You can't deny it! You did—you did!" screamed Billy.

"I didn't, Mr. Herbert," said Jasper. "He was seen on our fire-escape and the money was gone. I am sure he took it. I don't want to send *him* to jail; but——"

"What are you screeching about like tiger-cats? Speak plain,—what do I know about

your mother or your aunts?" said the bewildered Mr. Herbert. "You're wasting my time."

"His mother came to my house, and said, 'You're a thief, Billy Patcher,' when I knew, and can prove, that Jasper Thorn took it all, sir, I can——"

"Oh, I didn't, Mr. Herbert,—don't—don't believe him. My Aunt Katharine sent me the money. You can write to her and ask her! Why, Mr. Herbert, I'd rather die than steal a dollar!"

Billy Patcher was almost purple with rage. Jasper was very pale. Both were obliged to be silent, for Mr. Herbert raised his hand threateningly. It was plain to him that something was wrong. What, he did not know. Somebody had stolen something,—that was all he could make out. He was prepossessed in favor of Jasper, because Miss Catherwood, who was a great friend of his, had given him the flowers, and because Jasper had a gentlemanly look. But, he reflected, Miss Catherwood might have given flowers to a bad boy, and many bad boys had a gentlemanly look. It was hardly his

business,—this affair of mothers and aunts,—but he might just as well get to the bottom of it, and set Thorn to work.

“The money is lost, eh?” he said.

“No, it is spent,” cried Billy, “and he spent it.”

“He did, did he?” said Mr. Herbert. “What did you spend it for?”

“Oh, for sardines and things for mother;—but it wasn’t your money. It was my aunt’s money.”

“I know it wasn’t my money, my dear boy,” said Mr. Herbert, with some irritation. “And I didn’t want to claim your aunt’s money. What I want to know is, who stole the money?”

“He did,—and he spent it, too!” said Billy.

“I did not, Mr. Herbert!”

“You’ve just said you did,—I can prove that he spent it! I know what he spent it for! I know how much he spent. His aunt’s money! Why, they are as poor as poverty! His mother will have to take in washing if she doesn’t look out.”

“Not while I’m alive!” cried Jasper.

"You'll be in jail soon,—in the Tombs,—you stuck-up fool!—yes, and I'll go and throw peanut shells at you through the bars,—that's what I'll do."

"Look here," said Mr. Herbert, "you'll have to stop this noise. Stop talking about your mothers and your aunts. They are doubtless most respectable ladies, but you're making too much fuss about them. What money was stolen? Who did it?"

"He did it!" said Billy.

"It's not true,—he did it!"

"Celia McGonigle saw him spend it."

"It was my aunt's money."

"His aunt is all hokey pokey;—he ain't got no aunt!"

"I have,—my Aunt Katharine is abroad."

"He can't be trusted,—you make him give the money up;—I'll stay here until Mr. Catherwood comes. He'll thank me, too. His aunt's abroad! That's just his stuck-up way of talking. You just search him; you'll find it;—I'll hold him. Just search his clothes!"

"Boys," said Mr. Herbert, his good-natured face assuming a look of despair, "this must

stop. I do not know who took the money ; I don't particularly care whether it was your aunt's or your mother's money. And if all your relatives are abroad, it is none of my business. Of course, I can't keep a boy here that steals."

"You're right!" said Billy, promptly. "Turn him out and give me the place. Mr. Catherwood will be pleased."

"He can decide for himself later. At present there's work to be done, and somebody's got to do it. You see? Well, I can't have a boy of bad character about, so I'll just start one of you to work. You're both Catholics?"

"I am," said Jasper, flushing. He had heard that some people had a prejudice against Catholics and believed that they were capable of everything bad. Nevertheless, he would confess his religion, if it sent him to jail.

"Very well," said Mr. Herbert, "I thought so. And you, too?"

Billy lowered his eyes. Mr. Herbert was probably not a Catholic ; he was no doubt prejudiced against Catholics. Billy would have liked to answer "No." But he dared not, for

he knew that Jasper, whose eyes were fixed on him rather scornfully, would contradict him.

“Oh, yes, I suppose I’m a Catholic,” he said, flippantly. “But I’m not a good one.”

“Then,” said Mr. Herbert, slowly, “you’d better get away from here. You probably took the money. I’m not a Catholic myself, but I’ve heard on the best authority that a bad Catholic is not to be trusted.”

Heavy drops of perspiration came out on Billy’s forehead.

“But, Mr. Herbert, it was your money he took,—the money in Mr. Catherwood’s bank book. He took it and spent it. The bank book that you gave him,—the cheques,—the money he was to have put in the bank, you know ; he went and spent it,—I’m telling the truth ;—and you’ll find it out !”

Mr. Herbert looked from the angry, flushed face of one boy to the piteous face of the other,—and his kindly heart went out to Jasper, in whose eyes he read the deadliest fear and horror. Billy looked malignant,—Jasper seemed like a helpless creature on which the ax was about to fall.

“If you’re talking about Mr. Catherwood’s bank book, I may as well tell you,” he said, with a short laugh, “that you are making a great fuss about nothing. Neither of you could have used that money ; neither of you could have put those cheques in the bank, or used them in any way. They were useless ; they had been sent back from the bank, cancelled. Mr. Catherwood gave Thorn the wrong bundle in a brand-new book. He was in a great hurry, and he soon found out his mistake ; so if the book and all the cheques are lost it will not make much difference. Here, you, Thorn,—you get to work ;—and you, sneak!—you get out!”

Billy Patcher shot through the door.

Jasper laid his head on the desk.

“Thank God !” he said. “Oh, thank God.”

Mr. Herbert, seeing that the boy was crying, kindly went back into his own office.

CHAPTER XVI.

BILLY PATCHER ARRESTED.

A MONTH passed. Mr. Catherwood had concluded at the last moment to go with his daughter to London, and Mr. Herbert was too busy to ask him about the cancelled cheques. The month was uneventful. Suddenly it grew cold and everybody became aware that winter was at hand. Fortunately, Mrs. Thorn and Jasper had a large supply of clothes, and Aunt Katharine sent him from Paris a coat of fine cloth lined with gray fur. It made Jasper smile.

“I wonder if Aunt Katharine really thinks that I could wear such a coat down to the office!”

The loss of Aunt Katharine's gift of money did not trouble the Thorns. They had come safe from under the shadow of a fearful danger,

and that was enough. Once or twice Jasper wondered aloud whether Billy Patcher would ever make restitution or not. But his mother said quietly that she did not believe that Billy had taken the book. A change had come over Mrs. Thorn since the discovery that the cheques were cancelled. It seemed to her that God had performed a miracle. She no longer worried about the future. She and her son were in the hands of God ; she could ask no more.

“If your father were to come back out of the grave to-morrow,” she said, “I should not be surprised. God has been so good,—so good !”

Jasper kept hard at work at his Spanish in the long winter evenings.

Celia could not understand this.

“Of what use will it be ?” she asked one Sunday, when Jasper was writing an exercise he had omitted to do the night before.

“I don’t know, Celia,” Jasper said, “but my father wanted me to study Spanish ; I began it with him, and so I keep it up. All knowledge comes of use some time.”

During these days of work, study and little

play, Jasper said that he learned how to do without things. His mother sighed when she thought of his having such little leisure.

“If you could only skate or have amusement with other boys in the Park,” she said.

“Oh, mother,” Jasper said, cheerfully, “how could I play? I have exercise enough down town. I almost ran the soles off my feet to-day,—Mr. Herbert sent me five times to the Stock Exchange, three times to the Astor House and twice to the World Building. Besides, there were lots of other things to do. I don’t feel much like skating or dancing either.”

Jasper was happy in his work. Mr. Herbert seemed pleased with him, and even raised his wages. Jasper suspected that Mr. Catherwood had been told by letter of the episode of the pocket-book, and that to this was due the extra dollar a week. He was wrong and right. Mr. Catherwood knew of the episode; but Mr. Herbert had increased Jasper’s wages because he thought the boy deserved that sign of favor.

Jasper grew strong and robust and alert. He was learning how to take care of himself. He made a confidante of his mother on all

occasions. One night he came home, much dissatisfied with himself.

After dinner, as they sat at the table, with the lighted lamp between them, Jasper said,—

“I told a story to-day?”

“Oh, Jasper,” exclaimed his mother. “I’m sorry.”

“Well, I’m sorry, too. You see all the boys in our building were making up a collection to go off with a target company to Staten Island on New Year’s Day. They wanted me to give them a dollar. You know, mother, that I couldn’t afford it, so I said that I had already subscribed to another company.”

Mrs. Thorn looked grave.

“You should have said that you could not afford it,—the truth in these cases is always best.”

“But it would seem so mean and close!”

“Never mind that. The truth pleases God.”

“People say that it is easy to be manly and straightforward; I think that it is hard!”

“It is easy when you have acquired the habit,—and the habit must be acquired now.”

“You don’t think that it was a mortal sin?”

asked Jasper, surprised by his mother's serious tone.

"No. There are many unmanly things that are not mortal sins ;—sometimes scarcely sins at all ; but they are mean, all the same. If you do not examine your conscience for the little meannesses as well as for the great sins, you will scarcely acquire manly habits."

Jasper blushed. "I am ashamed of being poor, mother. The other fellows in our building are just as poor as I am, but they spend lots of money for cigarettes and things."

"It is hard to be poor, but there ought to be no shame in poverty like ours. We are doing our best."

Jasper hung his head ; but he felt glad that he had told his mother the truth ; and he resolved, with his whole heart, never to let false shame lead him astray again.

Christmas was spent very cheerfully. The mother and son made each other a little gift. Jasper's to his mother was a canary-bird in a cage ; hers to him a pair of warm gloves.

In the evening Celia and Monkey Angliori and Celia's brothers were invited into Mrs.

Thorn's rooms. She had managed to hang a tree with a pretty trifle for each of them. Monkey's was an orange, stuck full of lemon sticks, and Celia's a pair of black satin slippers which Mrs. Thorn had worn only once. When Mrs. Thorn saw their faces light up as they took these gifts from the tree, she thanked Heaven that she had the power of making them happy even for a few minutes. She had even sent an invitation to Mrs. Patcher and Billy, for she was anxious, especially at Christmas, to return good for evil; but neither Mrs. Patcher nor Billy came.

She became greatly interested in the McGonigle family. It touched her heart to see how cheerfully Celia worked to keep the family together, and how bravely she met every obstacle.

Matilda, Mrs. Thorn's old and faithful servant, looked in occasionally, to mend Jasper's clothes and sew on his buttons. She would not believe that anybody in the world could do these for him as they ought to be done. But Jasper startled her one day by showing her that he could sew on his own buttons.

“I have learned, Matilda,” he said, laughing, “because I am no longer a child,—and a poor man ought to be able to help himself in every way.”

Matilda threw up her hands in astonishment.

“Oh, dear! To think of it!” she said, “I mind the time when you were as helpless as a baby, with your own horse to ride, and you never needing to lift a finger.”

“Poverty has made a man of me, nurse,” he answered, cheerfully. “Just think of it!—I take care of mother now, and when you’re old, Matilda, I’ll take care of you, too!”

“Bless the boy!” said Matilda, gratefully. “I believe he would!”

“Yes, I would!” said Jasper. “Mr. Herbert is pleased with me, and I am sure that I shall earn as much as ten dollars a week some day.”

Matilda said nothing in reply. She was proud of her boy; when Mrs. Thorn entered, bringing several jackets and trousers, with several holes in them and evidences of having been darned previously, Matilda held up her hands again.

"As Jasper does not need your services, I thought I'd ask you to help me with these. They belong to George and Nick McGonigle,—poor boys who live downstairs. They've no mother," Mrs. Thorn added, hastily, as she saw a frown gathering on Matilda's brow.

"And did *you* try to mend them?" asked Matilda, looking at the queer patches.

"Oh, no!" said Mrs. Thorn, "*I* can do better than that! Poor little Celia, who has to look after three rough boys, did it."

Matilda seized a needle and began to work at the garments almost before Mrs. Thorn had ceased speaking.

As the evening wore on, Mrs. Thorn told Matilda the story of the McGonigles.

"Poor dear," said Matilda, "you can't help them now. There was a time when twenty-five dollars wasn't anything to you;—but things have changed. You have nothing to give away now."

"Oh, yes, I have," said Mrs. Thorn, cheerfully, "I find that I can give away many things I learned when I was in more fortunate circumstances. I am teaching Celia to cook."

Matilda again made her favorite gesture of holding up her hands.

"Let these McGonigles alone," she said, "you'll only make them stuck-up. What good will cooking do this little girl? The like of them ought to stick to plain fare."

"But the plain fare is not well cooked," said Mrs. Thorn, "and I believe that, if Celia's father had good food to eat and a pleasant place, he would stay at home more and drink less. And, if I help to bring that about, I can do more than I could do if I were a rich woman."

"There may be something in that," said Matilda. "I think education is all wrong. My sakes! I can barely read and cipher,—but I have always got along in the world. There ought to be more cooking,—with brains in it,—in the schools, and less mathematics,—that's my idea!"

Mrs. Thorn smiled, and Jasper laughed outright.

"There's a child like this Celia;—it's better that she should be taught to make home pleasant, than that she should spend years over

her books. And you can't make home pleasant unless you're taught. It's an art, just like painting."

"Well, Matilda," said Mrs. Thorn, "I hope that you will help me to teach Celia."

Later in the evening, Jasper and Matilda went down to visit the McGonigles. Celia, George, Nicholas and little William were at home.

The two elder boys were seated at the table with a tin plate heaped with stew before them ; and Will sat in a little chair, busily engaged in making a cat's cradle with some very dingy string. Celia knelt in front of a rusty stove, in which she was trying to make a fire.

"Law sakes !" said Matilda, as she laid the mended jackets and trousers on an empty chair, "why don't you have more light?"

The kerosene lamp which stood on the table near the stew, gave out a dim light.

"The light will not burn better, ma'am," said Celia, meekly.

"Oh, yes,—it will !" said Matilda. "You haven't cut the wick properly."

She lifted the glass quickly, covering her

hand with her apron, and with a quick cut of the sharp scissors she took from her pocket, she reduced the room to darkness. Celia hastened to give her a match. Matilda lit the lamp, wiped the glass off slowly, and gradually turned the flame up.

"There!" she said, triumphantly. "Things don't come by nature in this world; you've got to learn even how to light lamps. Look at it now! With a nice shade, you wouldn't want a better lamp!"

The boys exclaimed in admiration.

Jasper's heart became heavy. He wondered how he could *live* at all, if he had a home so dreary as this. If Billy Patcher had to live in this way, no wonder he preferred the theatre and the street. A great pity filled him, as he saw Celia struggling with the fire in the rusty stove.

"Let me try that," he said.

Matilda snorted.

"You never made a fire in your life, Jasper," she said.

"Oh, yes, I have," answered the boy, "I have made several since I have been poor."

Jasper carefully piled up the sticks and the paper, and soon had the fire blazing.

"What do you put into it to make it go?" asked Celia, admiringly. "Sometimes I use a whole pint of kerosene."

Matilda shuddered.

"Never do it again," she said, warningly. "Put your brains into the work. It requires brains even to make a good fire."

While they were talking, Will and Monkey, who crept from the closet, and had been disputing about a pasteboard box, suddenly came to blows.

Jasper laughingly separated them. Monkey, who had taken a fancy to Jasper, held out the box.

"Yours," he said, grinning from ear to ear. "Yours! Ecco! Altro! Yours! I took it from your flat."

Surprised, Jasper looked into the box. And there lay the bank book and Aunt Katharine's money.

Monkey still grinned.

"I took it," he said, evidently well pleased. "I saw Patcher boy going to go up your lad-

der. I run to get things ; he no rob you,—I take what I find, to keep for you. Will want it. He baby ; no sense. I forget. Ecco !”

This was all that could be got from Monkey. He smiled, grinned, danced,—did everything possible under the circumstances, but make a clear explanation. Jasper saw that the money was all there, and that the envelope enclosing Mr. Catherwood’s new bank book had been slightly torn. He was content enough ; he could only conclude that Monkey had simply picked up what he saw and forgotten all about it. He thanked Monkey, and Matilda and he were about to leave, when a heavy tramping was heard in the corridor outside.

“A boy has been arrested !” said a voice outside. Everybody in the room, excepting Matilda and Jasper, dashed at once to the door, which was left open.

In the dim light of the hall, Jasper saw Billy Patcher in the grasp of a policeman.

CHAPTER XVII.

BILLY PATCHER.

I CAN say honestly that I am glad that you, my dear reader, are not Billy Patcher, because Billy, as he was dragged upstairs, had a guilty conscience.

I hope that none of the boys who read this story will ever be in the grasp of a policeman for breaking a pane of glass or for any other misdemeanor,—but if, by chance, they should be wrongfully accused and have, like Jasper, great fear for a little while, they will be sure to come out of the scrape well, if they have not lied or done willful wrong.

Now Billy Patcher had done both ; he had seen a broken pane of glass in the window of a druggist and thrust his hand through, to take a beautiful white sponge ; he could not reach it, and just as he was trying to hook his fingers

in the sponge, the policeman found him and dragged him away.

Billy declared that he had not intended to touch anything ; he had seen the broken glass and he was attempting to mend it. This was the absurd story he told ; and he stuck to it.

“I’ll cross my breath,” he said, facing the policeman, “I’ll never tell a lie, if I didn’t try to mend the glass,—that is, fix the pieces together !”

The policeman, whose name was Sam Slocum, laughed.

“If any other boy in this neighborhood ‘crossed his breath,’ I’d believe him ; but I would not believe you on oath. Joe Tagliapietra says that you steal bananas whenever you can. Half-a-dozen people complain against you ;—I can’t let you off this time. When a dog gets a bad name, it takes very little to hang him.”

“I am not a dog !” said Billy Patcher.

“Then you ought to have acted like a man. Didn’t I see you take an orange from the blind woman’s stall the other day ? I couldn’t catch you then. Ah, here’s your mother !”

Mrs. Patcher joined the crowd; she pleaded for Billy with all her might. If the policeman would only let him go, he would be a good boy for the rest of his life. Sam Slocum kept a tight grip on Billy, who was very pale; his conscience told him of many sins that might all come out, if there was an investigation about the druggist's window. If he had always told the truth, the policeman would believe him now. How he wished that he had never lied! How he wished that he had not been tempted by that sponge! How he wished that he had always been good!

Mrs. Patcher clung to the policeman's arm; —“Oh, let my boy go!” she exclaimed. “Do let him go this once.”

“I have let him off too many times already. I have heard it said that your son took a bank book belonging to Mrs. Thorn. She's a good woman,—and, if she says that Billy did it, I'll take him off. If not, I'll let him go. And I hope that his mother will look after him better, instead of ‘going on’ this way in the street.”

The policeman, still holding Billy, made his

way towards the house in which the Thorns lived. Billy kicked and struggled.

“Don’t take me there !” he said. “Jasper Thorn would swear my life away. He hates me ! He hates me !” he raised his voice and screamed. “Oh, don’t take me there ! Don’t take me there !”

“A-ha !” said Sam Slocum, grimly, “this looks like guilt. You’re afraid to face the Thorns ! This is bad, my boy ! I’ve been on your track for some time,—I’ve got you at last on a charge that will keep you out of mischief for months ! Come on !”

The crowd followed. There was no voice raised for Billy, except his mother’s. He had been unkind to nearly everybody in the block. He had tormented the Chinese, stolen from the Italians, and hung a cat in front of the French restaurant which made specially good rabbit stew. He had called names after lame Pat Connors and snatched a cake from the Polish Jew baby. But, after his mother had wailed and wept for some time, Pat Connors was the only one to say a good word for him.

“I’ll say this for him,” said Pat, toiling on

his crutches after the policeman, "that he never stole anything from *me*!"

The crowd laughed.

"You've nothing he could steal, Pat," said the policeman.

"I have my crutches," said Pat.

The policeman laughed, and dragged Billy, who struggled and kicked with all his might, upstairs.

"I'm gone,—I'm done for, mother," he said, as his mother, with red eyes, and disheveled hair, kept close to him. "The Thorns will be glad to see me in jail."

"Oh, Billy, Billy!" his mother said, "if you escape jail this time, won't you do better?"

"I will, mother," Billy whispered, "but there's no use talking. I've done Jasper Thorn harm, and he'll swear, just for spite, that I took the bank book,—I know he will. It's just what I'd do for him,—for I hate him!"

Upstairs Billy was dragged, his mother following. Jasper and Matilda entered Mrs. Thorn's rooms before the group reached the landing in front of them.

The distress of Mrs. Patcher was piteous.

“Oh, Billy,” she cried, “pray, pray that the Thorns may not turn against you !”

“There’s no use in prayer,” said Billy, sullenly. “They’re Catholics, too,” he added, “but you see they’ll lie about me just like other people. And, mother,” he whispered, “if they once put me into jail *other things will come out!* I have done a lot of bad things !”

Mrs. Patcher’s lips moved as in prayer.

“The boy is a villain,” said the policeman, “and I’ll be glad when he has been put out of the way of mischief.”

Mrs. Patcher, with streaming eyes, ran ahead and entered Mrs. Thorn’s parlor.

“Oh, save my boy !” she cried. “Oh, Mrs. Thorn, save him !”

Mrs. Thorn sat on the sofa, near her little table on which her big red geranium bloomed. Jasper was near her, and, opposite, was Matilda telling the story of the bank book, which she held in her hand.

Sam Slocum put his head into the room. A group of eager faces was visible behind him. Billy’s white, sullen countenance met Mrs.

Thorn's gaze. He seemed to be in a deadly anguish.

Looking at him, she said to herself: "What an evil face! How sorry I am for his poor mother."

Billy's heart was sinking; his knees were trembling; and his hands cold and clammy. But he put on an air of hard defiance. He looked at Mrs. Thorn with a cold stare. At that moment, he would have given everything in the world to have a clear conscience. He was afraid of prison; he was afraid that many mean things done by him might be brought to light. Almost for the first time in his life, he wished that he were good. It was no use now, he said to himself; everybody was against him; those Thorns would swear away his life if they could!

"I called here, ma'am," the policeman said, "because I heard that this boy had stolen something from you. There is almost enough against him to send him to jail. A lot of little, mean things;—and he has aggravated me so much that I made up my mind that, if I could catch him in a big thing, I'd cart him off!"

"You may as well send me at once, then," interrupted Billy. "I'm done for. These folks wouldn't say a good word for me. They're liars,—that's what they are!"

"Oh, be quiet," his mother implored, wringing her hands. "Oh, *do* be quiet! Don't mind him, Mrs. Thorn, the child is beside himself."

"Shut up, mother!" exclaimed Billy, and the policeman shook him violently.

"A boy that talks that way ought to be hanged!" he said. "Mrs. Thorn, please say what you know about him."

"Oh," said Billy, "stop talking, and take me to jail at once. I stole their money and the bank book, of course! That is what they'll say. There's no use in keeping me here. Go on;—kick me when I'm down!—that's all right!"

"You did not take the money!" cried Mrs. Patcher. "Oh, Billy, say that you did not take it!"

"I didn't take it, mother," Billy said, "but these people will say so and this cop will believe them. It is too good a chance for them

to get even with me. What is the use of my saying I didn't take the money? Nobody would believe me!"

"You're right there, sonny. A boy that tells a lie whenever he thinks people will believe him, ain't got much chance of being believed when he wants to get out of a scrape," said the policeman.

The group had increased to a crowd on the landing, and more people were coming up the stairs, curious to know what was the matter.

Mrs. Patcher threw herself on her knees before Mrs. Thorn; she clasped her hands in supplication and called out wildly,

"Oh, ma'am, let him off, if he did take your money,—save me from the grave and him from prison!"

"Do you not believe what your son says?" asked Mrs. Thorn, in surprise. And her heart grew glad, as she thought that she could never doubt Jasper;—she was sure that he would tell her the truth under all circumstances.

"Oh, ma'am, for the sake of a poor mother say that my son is not a thief! It can do you no good to send him to jail;—it will kill me!"

“Stop, mother,” said Billy, “stop, I say ! Don’t be kneeling to the likes of these upstarts, —don’t !”

Suddenly his voice changed, the hard look left his face, and tears stood in his eyes. “Everybody is against me, mother, except you,” he said. “And I’d give the world not to have made you suffer so,—yes, I would !—I’d try to be good,—yes, I would !—if I were out of this scrape ! But there ain’t no way out,—not any way at all ! Yes, mother, I’ll say this for you, if it will give you any comfort, that *I* didn’t take their money,—I don’t believe they had any money,—and I am telling the truth, mother, I want you to believe me ;—and I don’t care what anybody else thinks !”

Mrs. Patcher threw her arms around Billy’s neck.

“I believe you,” she sobbed, “though nobody else does,—nobody else !”

“I believe him !” said Mrs. Thorn, stepping forward and putting her white hand on Billy’s brown fingers. “Cheer up, Mrs. Patcher, Billy shall not go to jail. There was no money taken from us, sir,” she added, turning very

graciously to the policeman. "There was some money and a bank book mislaid,—or rather," she added, remembering Monkey Angliori's good intentions, "it was put away by a friend of ours for safekeeping. Here is the bank book, too. It has been recovered ;—and I am happy to say that Billy Patcher is innocent."

"Glad to hear it," said the policeman, in a somewhat disappointed tone. "I *had* hoped that this rascal of a boy would be put out of harm's way ;—sent to the Protectory or something,—for his own sake. He'll end by being hanged. There is no good in him."

Billy's eyes opened wide ; he could hardly credit the evidence of his senses. He did not withdraw his hand from Mrs. Thorn's ; he seemed for a moment as if turned to stone.

"Thank the lady ! Thank the lady !" his mother exclaimed. "It's from shame she's saved us this day."

"I guess I'll have to let you go, Billy," said the policeman, with a sigh. "I can't prove that you were trying to take anything from that window. If I could, I'd jug you at once !

You're a nice peach you are!—to be driving your mother to the grave with your tricks. It's lucky you've found a friend in this kind lady. If you ever give me another chance, Billy Patcher, look out! Good-evening, ma'am."

The burly policeman turned on his heels and walked away. The crowd followed him. Jasper closed the door.

"Sit down," he said, "and wait until the people go."

Mrs. Patcher sank into the chair Jasper offered her. Billy stood, shamefaced and sullen, for a moment; but he could not resist Mrs. Thorn's kind smile and unaffected politeness; he took a chair, too.

"You must both take a cup of tea," Matilda said, rising and going into the kitchen. "There is nothing like tea for the steadying of the nerves, Mrs. Patcher."

Billy said nothing; he turned his face towards the window; Mrs. Thorn saw that there were tears in his eyes. She motioned Jasper and his mother to follow Matilda into the kitchen.

As soon as he found himself alone with Mrs.

Thorn, Billy tried to thank her ; but the words would not come ; the fear of that awful prison which he had just escaped seemed to choke him.

Mrs. Thorn led him gently to the feet of the white figure of the Refuge of Sinners.

“Kneel there,” she said, “try to remember your prayers and thank *her*.”

She walked softly into the kitchen, to join the others. She drew Mrs. Patcher to the door.

“Look !” she whispered.

Mrs. Patcher’s eyes became moist, as she saw her son, with the lamplight falling on his upturned face, kneeling before the figure of Our Lady. Mrs. Thorn felt that the mother was trembling.

“Your son is thanking God and His Mother,” she said, “He is saying the prayers you taught. He has begun to be good ;—and you must help to make him stay good.”

After a while, Matilda went into the other room with a tray of fragrant tea and crisp toast. Billy rose hastily, and tried to seem as if nothing had happened, when Jasper gave him the biggest cup of tea, with the motto on it, “For a Good Boy.”

Matilda called attention to it ; Jasper laughed ; but Billy said, with a new expression on his face,—

“ I appreciate the compliment.”

And Mrs. Patcher wept again, as she heard her boy use such beautiful language !

Billy Patcher spoke little ; as he said afterwards, he felt as if he had passed through a painful illness ; “ as a fellow feels when the toothache is gone,” he thought.

He slowly drank his tea ; his distrust of those around him vanished ; he had never before met people who returned good for evil. “ They are angels or fools,” he thought. After a time he concluded that they were “ just good—that’s all !”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE INVITATION TO THE CIRCUS.

BILLY PATCHER walked homeward by his mother's side. At first he said nothing. After a time, he spoke,—

"I've been a mean boy, mother," he said, "and I know it. I've been a bad boy ; I've done lots of bad things. And when Sam Slocum was just ready to take me to jail, they all came up before me. I knew that I deserved to go to jail, mother,—and that was the worst of it all. And then I knew that I didn't take that bank book and that nobody would believe me,—*nobody*!—because my reputation is bad."

"Don't talk of it, Billy," his mother said. "Be a better boy."

"I feel like being a better boy now, mother. You see I was so bad because it seemed to me that everybody expected me to be bad,—and then I hated Jasper Thorn and his mother more than anybody because I thought they

looked down on me. I thought, too, that they'd do me a nasty turn whenever they could. I'm sure that if I had the chance they had, I'd have put Jasper in jail. Of course I wouldn't now. I didn't think anybody could be so good,—except perhaps a priest,—as Mrs. Thorn. She doesn't seem to want to get anything out of you at all; she's just good because she's good."

"Billy," said his mother, timidly, "you ought to go to confession."

"No, I won't," answered her son, sharply. "Father says that it is all nonsense—only fit for women."

"Oh, my boy!—my boy!" Mrs. Patcher said, grasping his arm with her right hand. "*Do* listen to me! Your father is a good man;—but he does not understand."

"He understands enough for me; he enjoys life; and I mean to do the same without being bad;—I don't want too much church in mine!"

Mrs. Patcher began to cry.

"Stop, mother!" said Billy, somewhat roughly, "if you wanted me to be different why didn't you keep me out of the streets

when I was a little boy? I learned a lot there,—and among other things, not to be bothered about religion. You can be good enough without religion.”

Mrs. Patcher choked down a sob. She said no more. Since she had such little influence on her son, she made up her mind to speak about him to Mrs. Thorn. She lay awake nearly all the night, thinking of him, but she could find no comfort.

Jasper was very punctual in his work at Mr. Catherwood's office. Mr. Herbert, who had much to do in his chief's absence, was sometimes peremptory and irritable. He had learned to trust Jasper, but he never told him so. And Jasper, footsore and tired, often came home discouraged.

“Oh, mother,” he said, one night, “I just think that I shall die through sheer weariness;—it seems to me, mother, that I have to learn everything over again. I am so tired of it all! What is the use of my studying Spanish? It is of no use to me. What was the use of my learning to ride? I'm a poor boy,—that's all, and I'll never be anything better!”

His mother smiled, and set his favorite barley broth before him.

“Eat, my dear,” she said, “and, after that, you will feel better. And now, Jasper,” she added, after he had taken some spoonfuls of the soup, “let us talk. It is well that you should keep up your Spanish because your father began to teach you the pronunciation of the language and he wished you to learn it. Any study is good for you. You have begun, keep on. It is sad that we have lost Corsair, but your riding-lessons brought you health, and even your music-lessons, though we have no piano for your practicing, have done you good. Study ;—all knowledge is useful.”

Mrs. Thorn spoke these words very gravely. And, whether it was her tone or the warm soup that comforted him, Jasper regained courage. He wrote two Spanish exercises after dinner, and read aloud from “Dion and the Sibyls” until bed-time.

“We are happy, are we not, mother?” he said, after they had recited the rosary together.

“Yes, yes,” answered his mother ; “we

must be happy so long as God leaves you with me and keeps you good."

Mrs. Thorn heard Jasper singing in his room, as he undressed, and she smiled, as only the mother of a good son can smile,—a whole choir of happy little birds seemed to be singing in her heart.

Mrs. Patcher called on Mrs. Thorn on the morning after her talk with Billy. Mrs. Thorn had seen on her way from Mass that morning some sights that had made her heart sad. She had seen a drunken father led homeward by his daughter; she had seen a son taking refuge in a neighboring house, pursued by a policeman. How could she assist in preventing some of this wretchedness? she asked herself. She seemed entirely helpless.

As she sat by the window looking out into the street, obscured by a drizzling rain, Mrs. Patcher knocked at her door. At the same time the postman came upstairs and gave her two letters.

"I hope you'll excuse me, ma'am," Mrs. Patcher said, "but I came because I'm troubled in my mind."

“Mrs. Thorn smiled, and made Mrs. Patcher, who was very nervous, take the rocking-chair. She untied her bonnet-strings, and looked around her.

“Dear me !” she said, “what a happy home you have, so neat and clean, with flowers and the bird, and every room like a parlor ! And such a good son. Mr. Gibbons was telling me the other day that your boy was such a good example to his, and that he has dropped many of his wild ways since he knew Jasper.”

“You are very kind,” Mrs. Thorn said.

“And I thought I’d come in to ask you if you wouldn’t let Jasper go with my Billy at times,—maybe he could get him to go to church and to confession. His father doesn’t believe as I do ; it is very hard ;—I got wrong somehow, I am afraid I didn’t give a very good example to my husband in the beginning ; and he says, if the Catholic Church makes people as selfish as I am, he doesn’t want any of it. Only the other day, he saw your Jasper helping to pick up a lot of apples that had fallen out of an old man’s cart,—and he did not take one ! ‘That’s the kind of a boy I like,’ said

my husband, 'if you'd make Billy like that by means of your confession, maybe I'd go myself.' It is strange, ma'am, how the people about speak of your boy ; he goes about so quiet like, that you would not know he was living, if it wasn't for the good he does just by his example."

Mrs. Thorn smiled ; she was pleased. At the same time, she was not particularly anxious that Billy and Jasper should be much together.

"I will do my best," she said. "I shall certainly help you, if I can. I had no idea that people noticed Jasper. I assure you he is not an extraordinary boy. He is very fond of play, but I am sure that he wants to become a Christian gentleman."

"I forgot," Mrs. Patcher said, "that Mrs. Corcoran told me to say,—you remember Mrs. Corcoran, who takes care of the Spanish man, don't you ?—that she'd like to see you or your son. The dago man is getting better, and the priest that talks his language is away ; she says that he is very lonely and restless."

"I will send Jasper to him ; he speaks a little

Spanish. And, believe me, Mrs. Patcher, I will see what can be done with Billy."

Mrs. Patcher thanked her and went away. Mrs. Thorn opened the letters. One was from Rome, from Aunt Katharine. It was very brief. It ran,—

"Send Jasper to me at once. His future depends on it. If you do not, he will be a beggar all his life. I hear from Mrs. Moran that Jasper associates with the lowest people of the slums. She tells me that he helps an Italian at a fruit-stand, and even minds the Italian's baby. Are these fit occupations for my nephew? Send him next week by La Campagne. I will meet him at Havre. I enclose money. Cable your answer. I will promise nothing about religion. This is my last offer. If you do not accept it, I will drop his name from my will. Surely, my friend, two millions of dollars ought to make a change of religion easy. Send him."

Mrs. Thorn smoothed out the cheque for five hundred dollars and several crisp bills that had been enclosed in the envelope. She smiled to herself.

She opened the other letter. It was a short note.

"Mr. Benjamin Moran begs leave to send for Jasper Thorn's use, two tickets for the great equestrian show at the Madison Square Garden, on Monday evening."

“From Ben Moran’s father!” said Mrs. Thorn. “How formal,—but how kind! Jasper has been talking about this circus for so long. I’m afraid the flaring posters have had much effect on him, though the neighbors think he is such a quiet boy. Well, he shall enjoy himself for once! It was kind of Mr. Moran to remember how fond Jasper is of horses!”

Mrs. Thorn put Aunt Katharine’s cheque and bills into her pocket-book. That afternoon she cabled “No,” and returned the money, deducting only the price of the cable message.

She had no regrets and she knew Jasper never would have regrets. The choice between Our Lord, who had given up all Heaven to die on the cross for her, and two millions of money did not cost Jasper the slightest sadness. “What’s that line you say so often?” he asked, when his mother told him what she had done. “It’s from Tennyson, isn’t it? How does it go, mother?—but, oh, mother, think of it, I’m really going to the circus!”

“I hope you will enjoy yourself, my boy;—but what words do you mean?”

“Oh, you know ; your song—about fortune. If I’m to be poor,—and it’s a sure thing now, I think that I’ll take that song for a motto. Every boy ought to have a motto. Sing, mother, do ! I wish we had the piano.”

The rain had ceased. A great bar of sunlight suddenly pierced the gray of the late Sunday evening. It made an aureole of gold around the mother and son, as she sang softly,—

“Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown ;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down ;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great,
Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands ;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands ;
For man is man and master of his fate.”

“‘The lords of our own hands,’ mother !” cried Jasper, kissing her on the forehead. “It’s a fine thing, to have hands to work and a mother to work for !”

CHAPTER XIX.

JASPER'S SACRIFICE.

JASPER was pleased when he heard that Ben Moran's father had not forgotten him, though it was not so pleasant to know that Mrs. Moran had reported his nursing of the Italian baby to Aunt Katharine.

At first, he was inclined to feel offended ; but he ended by laughing.

"After all," he said, "I was once a baby myself,—I don't care what Ben Moran thinks !"

There was no question about the matter now ; he had been finally cast adrift by Aunt Katharine. Jasper was not a sentimental boy ; but he had thoughts as most boys have, which he never told to anybody, and he said to himself that, after all, to have the love of God and mother was better than all the luxuries Aunt Katharine could give him. The prospect of the circus, when he began to think about that,

put him in high good-humor. It had been such a long time since he had been amused by any of the things that had pleased him in the old days. He was fond of horses, and he still cherished in his heart the hope that he might some day see Corsair again. But Jasper did not expect life to bring him any of those incidents which happen so often in the story-books. He laughed as he went down town, out of pure enjoyment at the prospect of the circus, but it never occurred to him to expect that Aunt Katharine would suddenly send him a great sum of money or that Mr. Catherwood would pay him for his work by any unusual generosity.

He laughed again as he thought of a story-book he had once read, in which all sorts of fine things happened to the young hero.

"I shall just work hard all my life," Jasper said to himself, as he trudged down Broadway, and thought over the incidents of this book, "The Widow's Son." "I shall save my money, if there is anything left after mother is made comfortable, and be an honest working man all my days. Of course, my Spanish may be of some use,—though I don't see how

it can be, but father must have thought so, or else he would not have made me promise to learn it. Some day I may make as much as fifteen dollars a week !”

Borne up by this promise, Jasper went cheerfully down to Mr. Catherwood's office, and Mr. Herbert admitted that, on that day, Jasper was as nimble as a rabbit.

At dinner, Mrs. Thorn spoke of the circus.

“I will not go, my dear,” she said, “but I wish you would ask Billy Patcher to go with you. You'll have to go to Mrs. Corcoran's to see the Spaniard, you know, and you might just as well stop for Billy.”

“Billy Patcher. Why, mother,—he is not a nice boy at all. And you are always telling me to keep away from bad boys.”

“And you take my advice, Jasper. But Billy's mother thinks that perhaps, as you are about his own age, you might have some influence over him. You might induce him to go to confession. Of course, Jasper,” Mrs. Thorn continued, taking his hand, “I would not like you to be a constant companion of Billy Patcher's, because, firm as you may seem

in your resolution to be good and pure, a companion who is not good and pure will, little by little, have influence on you, if you see him too often. In this case, as Billy has a desire to be a better boy, I think it is your duty to help him. And a visit to this great exhibition will give him pleasure."

"But suppose Ben Moran should see me, mother!" said Jasper. "Billy Patcher has such a 'tough' look. The Morans may be there. I wish you would go!"

"I would go to please you, dear, if I did not think that this is a great chance for doing some good. Take Billy Patcher. Try to show him that you forgive him. Speak to him about confession. Your kindness will prevent him from resenting it, and, even if you do meet the Morans, you will have the consolation of knowing that you have tried to save a soul."

"I believe, mother, that you would like me to be a priest!" exclaimed Jasper. "These are the things priests are always thinking about. I shall never be good enough for that, though I think I should like it, too. Oh, no,

mother, I shall never be good enough,—besides, I shall have to work for you all my life !”

Not very well pleased at the prospect of having Billy Patcher's company, Jasper put on his best clothes and went to Mrs. Corcoran's house. She was full of regrets that he had taken so much trouble, for the “dago” had gone to look for work, and she did not expect him to return. She added that he was a decent man and that he had paid her more than he owed.

Jasper found Billy Patcher at home. He came to the door of the room, when Jasper knocked, with soapsuds dropping from his hands.

“Oh,” he said, much embarrassed, “it's you !”

“Yes,” Jasper said, “I thought I'd come to see you.”

“I'm going to the show at the Madison Square Garden,” said Billy. “If you have a quarter you can come too.”

“I have tickets,” said Jasper, “and I would like you to come with me.”

“Jiminy !” exclaimed Billy, as Jasper showed his tickets, “you have dollar seats !

Of course I'll go ! I was just going into the gallery and wait until the untrained horse should come in. You know the managers want people to try to ride him. They offer a prize."

"Do they ?" asked Jasper, indifferently. "I don't care to win prizes ; I want to see the show."

"We'll ride !" said Billy, withdrawing his head from the doorway, and dropping soapsuds over Jasper. "You wait till I wash. I won't be long. I'll pay the car fare."

"No," said Jasper, "we'll walk. We will not spend any money. Besides, we can talk as we go on."

Billy's mother was out, he said apologetically. Jasper waited five minutes in the hall. Then the two boys started, full of anticipation, for the Madison Square Garden.

CHAPTER XX.

BOBTAIL.

THE Madison Square Garden had been used for many "shows" of various kinds. There had been dog-shows and horse-shows and many others, but this was to be both a horse-show and an exhibition of riding in all the difficult poses of the circus. In fact, it was a circus, without the menagerie, the discordant band, the pink lemonade and the "side-shows," which are parts of the ordinary circus.

Jasper felt very important, as he gave his tickets to one of the ushers. Billy Patcher slunk back; he wondered at Jasper's coolness among all these "nobs," as he called the well-dressed people about him. The boys were led to two of the best seats in the house. Jasper saw Mr. Herbert in a box not far from him, and, after a while, Mr. Herbert bowed and smiled. Jasper's cheeks flushed, as he imagined

how surprised Mr. Herbert would be to see Billy Patcher by his side. But Mr. Herbert did not appear to notice him. Jasper felt easier : he was not ashamed of Billy, but he knew that Mr. Herbert would expect an explanation.

The boys settled back comfortably in their seats, and read the announcements on the program with great interest. There was an untamed horse, "Bobtail," to make his appearance in the second part of the program. To this announcement a note was appended. "Bobtail has never been ridden by anybody, except his owner, Mr. Stanley. He is the only horse that Mr. Stanley, the most famous of modern trainers, has not been able to fit for the harness."

"I'd like to try him," said Billy. "It would be great to ride that Bobtail ! Just think of doing what nobody else can do ! Just think of all those nobs and nobesses in the boxes clapping their hands and applauding !"

"I wouldn't like to risk it even for that," said Jasper, "I've got a mother to work for, and, if I got hurt, what could she do ?"

“I’ll try it, if they let me !” said Billy. “I don’t care,—I’ll try it !”

“Suppose that you should be killed ! I knew a horse once named Corsair,” Jasper sighed, as he mentioned the name ; “he was the gentlest horse in the world in the saddle, but he’d tear any man to pieces that tried to put him between shafts. Suppose this horse killed you !”

“I wouldn’t be afraid !” said Billy. “I used to drive Mark’s express wagon up and down Broadway twice a day last summer. I think that I’m equal to anything now.”

Jasper reflected. Here was his chance to say something important to Billy. He hesitated. What boy likes to preach ? And yet here was the chance his mother wanted him to take. It was a hard thing to do, and Billy might laugh at him for doing it. Moreover, the circus was hardly the place for such words as he felt obliged to speak.

“Billy,” he whispered, in a tremulous voice, “suppose that you should die without having gone to confession.”

Billy smiled in that “tough” and knowing way which boys of weak minds and common fiber affect

"I'd take my chances," he said. "Preaching can't frighten me."

Jasper began to grow angry, but he restrained himself.

"Billy," he said, "you'd better think,—you'd better begin to think. I know what horses like this Bobtail are : and driving an express-wagon even on Broadway is nothing to managing a horse that even an expert can't train."

"We'll see," said Billy, with sparkling eyes, "we'll see. I am not going to bother my head about religion."

"It is an awful thing to die unprepared."

Billy frowned, and for a moment he looked thoughtful. Then he turned to the program.

"The grand entry comes first,—they say that will be splendid ! And then there is to come a dance done by twenty goats and monkeys ! Hokey pokey ! That will be *grand* ! Then there's a chariot race. Then comes Bobtail. And then a pyramid of gymnasts riding in the ring on twelve horses,—gracious, Jasper, we're in luck !"

Jasper did not answer at once ; he had done his duty, and he was glad of it.

Looking around, Jasper saw Mrs. Moran and Ben at a great distance. They did not see him, and he was rather glad of it. Billy Patcher was better dressed than he was, but he pulled out a large cigar which he did not, of course, light,—that was against the rules,—but held between his fingers with a desperately “tough” air which Billy thought was an evidence of “smartness,” but which, in Jasper’s eyes, was detestable.

“Why don’t you put that cigar away?” asked Jasper.

“Because I don’t want to,—you’re a molly-coddle, you’re a peach, you are,” retorted Billy, sticking it in his mouth and chewing the end.

“A boy of your age ought not to smoke,” Jasper said. “And it’s not nice to hold that cigar in that way as if you were going to smoke.”

“Nice or not nice,” said Billy, “I’m going to smoke if I want to.”

“Not when there are ladies about,” said Jasper, firmly.

“Women or no women, I smoke when I want to,” said Billy. “You don’t know much,

—but you can't be blamed,—what's a kid, brought up at his mother's apron-string to know about life?"

Billy seemed so vulgar and odious that Jasper felt that he could associate with him no longer. Besides he had obeyed his mother and said what she had expected him to say.

"Excuse me," he said, "I'll find another seat."

He took his hat and walked away. Billy laughed, tilted the fat black cigar up towards his nose, and said between his teeth,—

"You'll know more, youngster, when you've been more in de swim."

He lounged over both the seats, and winked knowingly at an imaginary friend across the way. As Jasper went down the aisle in a very bad humor, he caught Mr. Herbert's eye. Mr. Herbert was in one of the boxes of the lowest tier. Jasper forgot Billy's insolence at once, and made his way to the box, in which Mr. Herbert sat alone.

"I'm glad to see you. I've been watching you for some time," Mr. Herbert said, shaking hands with him. "I wondered what you were

doing with that young brute. I'm glad you left him. You ought to be careful about your associates, Jasper," Mr. Herbert spoke kindly, but firmly.

Jasper blushed. How could he explain without seeming to praise himself. Mr. Herbert bowed to some friends who were just entering.

"Sit by me," he said. "This is going to be a great 'show,'—there are some wonderful horses here. It's like seeing Niagara in motion when Bobtail kicks the buggy to pieces,—as he always does. I've seen him do it twice. I'd like to have him as a saddle-horse, though,—he's a fine animal,—if I could afford to I'd buy him. That young lady who gave you the flowers would look well on Bobtail. Are you fond of horses?"

"Oh, yes!" said Jasper, eagerly.

Mr. Herbert's manner was very different from what it had been in the office. He was genial in his manner and not at all abrupt. Jasper thought that he looked like another man in his evening coat and large white shirtfront, with a great white flower in his buttonhole.

"By the way," he said, "that young lady

remembers, and she hoped in her last letter that you would be a good boy. I shall not tell her that I saw you with that young ruffian in the seat above ;—it might change her opinion of you.”

Jasper did not answer. There was a flare of trumpets ; and into the great ring rode a cavalcade of glittering knights, four by four.

Jasper forgot himself and everything else in this splendor. It seemed as if the beautiful procession would never end. First came the Knights Templars glittering in silvered armor, mounted on gray steeds half covered with red silk trappings. Each knight held high a silvered lance, from which floated a streaming pennant, and each bore a shining shield. After this group rode twenty-four black knights, each with a big red cross on his breast and on his jet-black shield. Waving plumes were upon their helmets, and Jasper thought that he had never seen any beings so terrible in appearance. As a relief forty pages in white and blue came after this. They shone with silver spangles and each carried a white or blue flag in his hand. In a chariot drawn by two

bay horses stood Boadicea, the British queen, followed by a long train of druids crowned with mistletoe. Milesius, in a robe of saffron color, his long hair bound by a saffron-colored fillet, with an Irish harp in one hand and a scepter in the other, came next, followed by fifty Irish bards, in light blue and saffron robes, bearing harps. After them strode a group of gallow-glasses bearing the blue flag of Erin, on which shone the Irish harp. Later, walked representatives of all modern nations,—a huge guardsman with the British flag, an Irish soldier with the green flag, five American sailors with the American flag, two Papal zouaves with the gold and white of the Holy Father,—altogether a mass of various colors. The people in the auditorium cheered as each flag passed. There was a blare of trumpets and a hundred golden-coated knights dashed into the ring and darted about in mimic fight. Then to soft music entered a beautiful black horse, led by a page ; he was succeeded by scores of fine horses of all colors, each led by a page clothed in black velvet.

Mr. Herbert watched Jasper with smiling.

interest. He was rather tired of the exhibition ; he had seen so many like it before. In fact, he was rather tired of most things since Miss Catherwood had gone away. He could trace all the varied emotions of wonder, admiration, almost fear, as the various groups passed Jasper. But the boy's gaze became so intense as the proud-looking horse appeared, that Mr. Herbert asked,—

“What's the matter, Thorn ?”

“What horse is that, sir ?”

“That ? The black one with the long tail ? That's the famous Bobtail.”

“Why !—it can't be !” cried Jasper. “That horse's tail is not cut.”

“I should think not,” said Mr. Herbert, with a smile. “They tried to dock his tail once,—but he raged so furiously that they wished they hadn't done it.”

“And that's Bobtail !”

Mr. Herbert laughed. The boy's intense interest amused him immensely. He wished that he were young again.

Jasper leaned eagerly over the ledge of the box, and whistled softly. Again he whistled.

The magnificent horse stood still for a moment and neighed, tossing his head from side to side.

Jasper's eyes flashed.

"Bobtail?" he said to himself, contemptuously. "Why, it is my Corsair! And he knows me! Mr. Herbert," he said aloud, "I hope those people will not attempt to put that horse in harness. He'll kill them, if they do!"

"What do you know about horses?" asked Mr. Herbert, amused. "But you're right,—nobody but the celebrated trainer, Mr. Stanley, can manage him."

Jasper said nothing.

"I hope," he thought, "Billy Patcher will not try to drive *him*."

The procession left the ring, the black horse going in last. As he went out, Jasper whistled. Again the horse neighed and tossed his head. It was certainly Corsair!

CHAPTER XXI.

“SI, SEÑOR.”

BILLY PATCHER had become greatly excited over the appearance of the celebrated horse. He had always been noted for his desire to “show off,” as the boys put it, and now the chance of “showing off” before all these people filled him with joyous anticipation. He cheered with all the rest as Bobtail passed, and resolved that he should try his hand at driving him when the opportunity came.

In the meantime, Jasper sat in his place, his heart beating rapidly. Corsair!—his beloved Corsair was near him! How happy Jasper would have been if he could have mounted on the back of the noble horse which had been his companion almost since he could walk, and ridden out into the night! Whither? To seek his father perhaps! To seek his father! He

awoke, as from a dream. His dear father was dead !

The ring-master made his announcements of the various acts. He wore a green coat, profusely trimmed with gold ; he was attended by a dark-complexioned man, who brought the hoops, whips, and other things, as he demanded them. The dance of the monkeys,—twenty red-jacketed little creatures,—was very funny, and Jasper enjoyed it.

One of the friskiest of the monkeys escaped and jumped from the railings, climbing to the edge of Mr. Herbert's box. Jasper caught it very gently and held it until the dark man came to him. The ring-master had evidently been struck by the careful way with which Jasper handled the monkey. He sent the man back to ask Jasper's name.

"Name?" the man said, smiling and showing his white teeth.

"What does he want?" asked Jasper, very much surprised.

"He wants your name," Mr. Herbert said, smiling. "You caught that little monkey so nicely, no doubt preventing him from scratch-

ing and biting the ladies, that the ring-master probably wants to send you tickets for to-morrow."

The dark-complexioned man smiled again, and said, "Si, Señor,—si!"

"Are you Spanish?" asked Jasper, in that language.

"Si, Señor,—from Havana."

"Oh!—well, then, my name is Jasper Thorn, and I live at number — Bleecker Street."

"You'll have to write it down, Thorn," said Mr. Herbert. "Here,—write it on my card."

Jasper obeyed.

"Jasper Thorn,—Jasper Thorn,—Jasper Thorn," repeated the man, slowly. Then he read it from the card, pronouncing it, "Hasper Torn."

"Well," said Mr. Herbert, as the man hesitated, and the sound of trumpets preluded the beginning of the next act, "isn't that all you want?"

"Buenas noches, Señor," Jasper said.

The man suddenly put his hand into his pocket and drew out a yellow envelope.

"It is yours," he said, in his own language,

“it is yours ; I have looked for you. My name is Juan Valero,—I will find you to-morrow, or you can come to me.”

Jasper thrust the envelope into his pocket. He thought that it contained the tickets, of which Mr. Herbert had spoken. The next act began ; it was a mock tournament between ten of the black knights and of the silver knights. The silver knights gained the victory. The trumpets blew again, and to the music of the Wedding March in Lohengrin, Bobtail entered. Mr. Stanley, attired in black clothes, rode him. Jasper held his breath,—Corsair seemed proud to show off all his good points.

“But he doesn’t understand him,” said Jasper to himself. “If he pulls Corsair up too tight he’ll refuse that hurdle,—no !—over he goes ; but it is because he wants to, not because he cares for his driver.”

Corsair took four hurdles neatly and elegantly. Mr. Stanley tried to force him to jump over a pond of water which had been let into the ring ; he refused. Jasper whistled a sharp note this time,—and Corsair went over like a flash. Mr. Stanley then explained that this

beautiful animal was the most intractable horse he had ever attempted to master.

“I shall be glad if anybody in the hall will attempt to drive him in harness, for I have never been able to do it.”

Billy Patcher had been waiting for this. He made his way to the gate of the ring.

“I want to try it, sir !” he called out.

CHAPTER XXII.

CORSAIR KNOWS.

THE horse, with Mr. Stanley at his head, stood still, while the shafts of a light buggy were adjusted to him. His nostrils expanded and his flanks quivered.

"It's foolish," Jasper muttered. "It's foolish,—why, he wouldn't even let me do it."

Mr. Herbert glanced at the boy with an amused smile, he could not catch what he was saying.

Mr. Stanley led Bobtail,—who was really Jasper's Corsair,—round the ring, holding him by the check-rein. After a time he drew Corsair to the center and made this little speech :—

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I have the honor of presenting to you the only horse that I had great difficulty in training. He is as gentle as a lamb in the saddle, but the

moment,—as I think you know,—any one attempts to drive him, he becomes almost mad. He was the property of a well-known gentleman in this city, at the sale of whose effects he was bought by an agent of mine. I have the pleasure of offering a prize of five hundred dollars for the man or woman”—there was a ripple of laughter here—“who will drive this splendid, but intractable animal once around the ring.”

There was silence. Billy Patcher spoke up again.

“I want to try!”

Some thoughtless people applauded, as Billy, with an air of bravado, leaped into the sawdust.

“No,—no, my boy,” Mr. Stanley said, kindly. “It will take stronger hands, a cooler head and more skill than you have, to do it. Let some man, who knows the risk and wants five hundred dollars, try Bobtail.”

“I hope nobody will,” said Jasper, with flushed cheeks. “Oh, I hope nobody will!”

Mr. Herbert smiled. The sincere anxiety of the boy amused him.

“Why?”

“The horse will *kill* anybody that tries it !”

“I don’t know,” said Mr. Herbert. “Hitherto he has always smashed the buggy ;—but some day he will meet a Tartar. I have a good mind to try.”

“Don’t !” said Jasper, earnestly.

“Why not ?”

“Well,” Jasper could not think of a reason that he could give without explanation, “well,—I would not,—that’s all.” And, as Mr. Herbert rose, as if to go to the ring, “Oh,—well,—Miss Catherwood would not like to see you with your skull smashed or an eye out. And Corsair,—I mean Bobtail,—might do it.”

Mr. Herbert laughed and sat down.

“No ?—she is coming back to-morrow, and we are to be married in the spring. I shall tell her that you have taken good care of me.”

Mr. Herbert was in high good-humor. There was a gentleness, a kindliness, a truthfulness about this boy, that had quite won his heart. He was severe and stern in the office ; but, after this, Jasper felt that he would not worry about the stiffness and sternness.

Mr. Stanley, the trainer, still stood at Cor-

sair's head. A man in a box threw a card into the ring, on which he had pencilled his intention of coming down to try Corsair. It fluttered near the trainer ; in his endeavor to seize it he let go of the check-rein. Billy Patcher had watched his chance ; he jumped into the buggy, took the whip from its case and flipped it over Corsair's head. Corsair rose on his hind legs and dashed around the ring at a breakneck speed, rearing several times. He seemed to be trying to break the shafts in two. Mr. Stanley did not move from his place ; he turned pale ; he kept his eye on Corsair ; it was plain that he intended to head the horse off, as Corsair made the second round. The people applauded, for Billy seemed to be holding his own ; neither they nor he realized his danger.

Mr. Stanley's face was deadly in its paleness. As Corsair passed him, he tried to grasp the rein, but the cunning horse shook his head, swerved violently, and left Mr. Stanley a dozen yards behind him. Nobody interfered, for Billy showed no signs of fear, but held to the reins bravely.

Suddenly Corsair began to back.

"I must go ! I must go !" said Jasper.

"Don't worry," said Mr. Herbert. "That cheeky little tough will take care of himself."

Jasper paid no attention to this. He ran down the aisle and jumped into the ring. He saw that Corsair was in one of his rages. He doubted whether he could control him ; in fact, he was too anxious to think coolly ; his one desire was to see Mr. Stanley and find some means of saving Billy's life. Corsair continued to back ; the people in the auditorium were becoming alarmed. Calls were heard for Mr. Stanley.

Corsair quivered in every limb ; he rose up, to throw himself back with all his might on the frail buggy. Billy had lost the reins ; he called for help. Corsair threw himself back again, started forward in an instant ; the buggy crashed to pieces, and Billy was tossed, like a bundle of rags, over the head of the furious horse and almost under his feet.

Corsair rose again, almost upright on his hind legs, above the insensible boy.

"He will crush his skull !" Mr. Stanley

murmured, powerless. "He has done the thing before."

Jasper was rushing to the horse.

"You fool!" cried Mr. Stanley, catching him in his arms. "Why didn't you stay in your place? Don't you see that nothing can be done?"

Jasper was pinioned; he could not move. Several men were making their way towards the horse; he saw them, and, instead of crushing Billy where he lay, he seized the boy in his teeth and dragged him round the ring. There were cries of terror. If Billy's coat should give way, the horse would certainly trample him to death. Mr. Stanley held Jasper tight, in spite of his struggles. In desperation, Jasper whistled, soft and clear.

Corsair dropped the boy. A man seized him and drew him out of danger. Corsair, who had released himself from the clinging shafts, stood still and looked in the direction of the sound.

Jasper jumped away from Mr. Stanley and ran to Corsair.

"Corsair!" he whispered. "Dear, old boy! Don't you know me?"

Corsair did know him,—he rubbed his nose against Jasper's shoulder and uttered the friendliest neighs.

“Dear Corsair! I wish I could take you home!”

Corsair, as gentle as a home-bred cat, stooped as he used to do, to let the little Jasper mount him. With sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks, Jasper was on his back in a moment. Between old friends like these the absence of a saddle or stirrups was as immaterial as the lack of spurs. Corsair showed off all his paces; he vorted; he demi-vorted; he loped; he waltzed; he pretended to be in a frightful rage and threatened to roll over Jasper, while Jasper smiled and kept his seat serenely. Jasper, in his pleasure, had forgotten all about Billy Patcher. As the crowning gambol, Corsair made three flying leaps over the hurdles in the adjoining ring. There was a storm of applause.

“It's amazing,” said Mr. Herbert, “but it is quite the best thing on the program.”

As Jasper rode through the arch behind the ring, he heard a man say :

“I’m afraid the boy’s dead. Does anybody know him? We’ve sent for a doctor.”

Jasper dismounted.

“A priest!” he said. “The boy must have a priest. I know him;—he’s a Catholic!”

CHAPTER XXIII.

A LESSON.

THERE was no doubt that Billy Patcher was seriously hurt ; he was unconscious, but still the music in the Garden sounded, and the various acts of the program were performed. Corsair had gone meekly to his stable, only neighing now and then and turning his head, as if in search of somebody.

Jasper rushed out of the dressing-room, where Billy had been laid upon a couch, and sought a priest. The policeman at the corner directed him to the nearest Catholic church. He easily found the pastor's house. In response to his tremulous ringing of the bell, a young priest, with his overcoat on, appeared.

“The hall light shone full on Jasper's face, and the priest was struck by the eagerness of its expression.

"Take breath, boy, take breath," said the priest, "I was just about to go to bed ; but, when I heard your step, it seemed to me that you must be a messenger of importance,—so I threw on my overcoat, to be ready."

"A boy is dying at the Madison Square Garden. Hurt badly," said Jasper, breathlessly. "Come !"

"Very well," said the priest ; he disappeared for a moment. He came back with his hat on, and he and Jasper went out into the street.

"Did you know this boy?" the priest asked.

"Oh, yes ; his name was Billy Patcher ; he went to school with me. I'm afraid he was not a practical Catholic, Father, and that is the reason why I am so anxious. I wouldn't tell you this, Father, only that I guess you want to know——"

"Poor boy !" said the priest.

A cab dashed up, as they reached the corner. Mr. Herbert called out :

"Is that you, Thorn?"

"Yes, sir," Jasper said.

"Get in,—at once !" He jumped out him-

self. "I'll walk. And will you, sir, please get in. It's all right!—I followed Jasper in this cab. Good-night!"

The priest thanked Mr. Herbert, as he took his seat, and the cab was driven hastily towards the Garden.

As he neared it and heard the lively music, Jasper's heart sank. What a strange thing is life! he thought.

Here were so many people enjoying themselves; and, not far from them, lay Billy, dying perhaps! After all, he thought, nothing could be truer than that the main thing in life was to be prepared for death. What counts, compared to that?

There was a large group of actors and attendants in the hall outside the dressing-room, in which Billy lay. They were very serious and interested.

"The doctor has come," one of them said, as way was made for the priest. Jasper stayed outside. In a short time, the doctor came out, looking very grave.

"No hope," he said. "Will somebody go for his mother?"

Jasper rushed off. Mr. Herbert was at the entrance.

"I told the cabman to wait," he said, "to take the priest back. Where are you going?"

"For Billy Patcher's father and mother! He is dying."

"Too bad!" said Mr. Herbert. "Take the cab! Drive to Bleeker Street, Jim. Give him the number, Jasper!"

Jasper gave him the number of Billy's house, and the cab, with flaring lamps, drove rapidly through the string of carriages that were waiting for people who were in the Garden. Past many lights, past dark shadows, the cab dashed on.

Left to himself, Jasper began to tremble. What should he say to Billy's father and mother? He reached the house and ran up the dimly lighted stairs. His heart sank when he discovered that Mr. Patcher was not at home. Mrs. Patcher smiled when she saw him; then, with her hand on the knob, she asked:—

"Where is Billy?"

"He wants you, ma'am," Jasper said,

trembling. "He is not well ; he has had a fall——"

"Is he alive?" she asked, smoothing her hair mechanically and reaching for her bonnet and shawl. "Is he alive?"

"Yes," said Jasper, "yes, and the priest is there."

"Thank God !" she said. She did not speak after this. And Jasper felt that she was very merciful in not asking questions ;—for it is such an awful thing to tell a mother that her son is about to die ! Her lips moved in prayer.

Kind hands assisted Mrs. Patcher up the stairs to the dressing-room. The doctor had gone ; the priest had been some time alone with the boy. His mother was admitted at once. The door remained ajar. Mr. Stanley, Mr. Herbert, some women and Jasper waited outside, with the priest.

"Oh, mother ! Oh, mother !" Billy's voice said, in a tone that went to the hearts of all those who heard it.

There was silence, and the sobs of the mother, low and deep, broke the silence.

“Oh, mother, if I could only live, I would be so good !—I would be so good !”

Jasper caught Mr. Herbert’s hand tight, and began to cry ; Mr. Herbert did not move ; he seemed to be trembling, too.

After a time Mrs. Patcher followed the slim body, carefully carried by four men, to the ambulance at the door. And the cry of the boy lingered, for many days, in the ears of all who heard it :—

“Oh, mother, if I could only live, I would be so good !”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE LETTER.

It was some days after Billy Patcher's death that Jasper thought of the note the Spaniard had given to him. The McGonigles had talked of poor Billy and drew lessons from his life. Indeed, Celia felt that to her the death of the poor boy was a blessing in disguise,—for so deeply were her father and the boys impressed with it, that she had the happiness of approaching the altar with them,—for the first time in her life. That was the one day on which Celia was truly happy.

Mrs. Thorn's efforts were not in vain. The rooms of the McGonigles were very comfortable now, and several pretty gifts,—such as a new tablecloth and a softly shaded lamp,—gave brightness to an interior which had hitherto been very dingy. The father and sons had

taken to playing whist together, under Mrs. Thorn's tuition, and Celia's face had begun to grow round and rosy from contentment.

"Oh, Mrs. Thorn," she said, many times, "you don't know what you've done,—no, you don't ! You've just saved us all !"

All thought of the Spaniard's note had left Jasper's mind until he happened to be brushing his best clothes preparatory to going to Mass on the Sunday after Billy's death. But he was in a hurry, and he put the note back, imagining that it was one of those letters asking for money, which so often passed through his hands on the way to Mr. Herbert.

After Mass there was a walk with his mother. On their return, luncheon occupied his attention, and then the Catechism class, to which he took Monkey Angliori.

But, all day long, there was hope in his heart,—much more hope than he had ever felt before. For, of late, he had worried a great deal. Mr. Herbert was very genial outside the office ; but inside, he was most exacting. This was a good thing for Jasper, for it taught him that work means *work* and not ease or comfort. Jasper

was sometimes troubled by the dreadful thought : what will mother do when I die ? This thought had not often occurred to him before Billy Patcher's death.

All day long, on this Sunday, there seemed, as he said to his mother, "birds singing in his heart."

"If I saw father come home to-morrow," he had said, during their walk, "I should not be surprised !"

His mother smiled wistfully.

"Ah, my dear," she answered, "we must not dream, but pray and act. And what we ought to pray for now is that your Aunt Katharine, who is very kind-hearted, may become a Catholic. Oh, my dear Jasper, if God and His Blessed Mother were not so near, loss and pain and sorrow would be unendurable !"

The birds of hope had been singing all day in Jasper's heart, but when his mother had left him for a time, to look at the sick baby on the lower floor, he felt lonely again ;—how dreary life seemed without his dear father,—how awful it would be, if he, like Billy Patcher, might die young. Jasper did not think only of him-

self. He had been brought up to look on God as his best friend, and to expect that, on any day, he might be taken to Him. But his mother!—his dear mother! How could he leave her? He recalled one of Matilda's proverbs, with a feeling of hope,—“God is between us and the door.” Yes, he said to himself, he might safely trust God.

As he felt for his handkerchief,—his eyes had become moist, as he thought of his father,—the Spaniard's envelope rustled in his pocket. He lit the gas, and looked at it. “Jasper Thorn, New York,” was written upon it in a shaky handwriting. He opened it, without much curiosity. Then—the room reeled round him; the writing on the slip of thin paper became dim; he clutched his left arm with his right hand. Was he awake? He pinched himself. Yes, this was his bedroom; but then, at other times, he had dreamed that he was in his own bedroom; he must, after all, be asleep, his heart almost ceased to beat. He read the words again; they were in his father's handwriting;—the pen evidently held by a weak hand. The note was dated at “Santa Rosa,

Island of Cuba," and it had been written six weeks ago.

"My Dear Jasper: I write hastily, as there is a messenger, Juan Valera, a kind sailor who was cast ashore with me from the Hyperion. My legs are broken, and I may not live through the operation of to-night. Juan Valera goes to Havana, and I hope that he may have a chance of sending this to you. There is no English-speaking person here. I will try to communicate with the captain of the Hyperion, who will probably soon be in Havana. The priest here is most kind. I am prepared for death. God bless your mother and you. If I die, may the Mother of God protect you both. Above all, Jasper, be true to your faith."

On the back of the paper was written, in a still more wavering hand,—

"It is over. I shall live."

That was all. Jasper said to himself, "I must think,—I must keep cool,—I must think." But, first, he threw himself beside his bed and thanked God with all his heart. He determined that he would go to see Father Freitag before he would act—or tell his mother. Father Freitag was now at the Redemptorist Church in South Fifth Avenue. Jasper was not long in reaching the church. It lacked an hour to

tea-time, and he thought that he might have some time for talk before his mother should return from her errand of mercy. The porter told Jasper that Father Freitag had gone out.

Grievously disappointed, Jasper turned away. He did not know where to go for advice. Mr. Herbert !—Mr. Herbert was out of town for the day ; he had gone to Larchmont, where there was to be a dinner at eight o'clock, in honor of Miss Catherwood's return.

And now, as in most of our lives, trifles came into Jasper's, and not for the first time. Joe Tagliapietro, the Italian fruit-seller, whom Jasper had befriended, was taking his afternoon walk. He wore a tall hat, a bottle-green coat and a red necktie, and his trousers were wide and of a large check in pattern ; he saw Jasper hurrying down the street, filled with thought. Joe liked him ; and, as he had been down to the docks, to go through some fruit-bearing vessels, he bore, together with a big cane, a brown paper-bag containing some little cans of guava jelly. Joe was grateful, and, like most poor Italians, as generous as he could be in the showing of his gratitude. He resolved

to give the guava jelly to Jasper. He saw Jasper ascend the steps of the rectory of the Redemptorist Church ; a friend, Giralomo Etateni, who was in the fruit business, too, stopped him. He kept one eye on Jasper still, and when he saw him descending the steps, he began to run quickly across the street. But, midway, his hat fell off,—it was second-hand and not a very neat fit. By this time, Jasper had reached the sidewalk, and he stood, waiting for Joe, whom he had recognized. A carriage passed rapidly on its way up town and a face at the window looked at Jasper and smiled,—Jasper, preoccupied, did not raise his hat until the carriage had almost run over Joe's precious hat. Joe dropped his cane and yelled at the coachman, who stopped just in time.

The young woman in the carriage looked out and tried not to laugh at Joe's excitement.

"Stop, Jackson," she said to the coachman, and Jasper, from his distance, saw that it was Miss Catherwood. "Stop ! My good man," she continued, speaking to Joe, who had picked up his belongings, "who is that boy over there ? I think I know his face."

“Si, Signorina!” said Joe, smiling, “that is a vera gooda boy;—Jasper Thorn; he is a gooda to all.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” said Miss Catherwood, “call him,—I should like to see him.”

The carriage was driven close to the sidewalk, and Jasper, escorted by the benevolent Joe, approached Miss Catherwood, who seemed more beautiful and lovely than ever.

“I am glad to see you,” she said. “Papa and Mr. Herbert expect to meet me at Larchmont. I arrived late last night and stayed with some friends in Brooklyn;—you seem quite pale and worried. I hope Mr. Herbert treats you well!” she added, with a smile. She was a very good-hearted and impulsive girl, and she thought that Jasper looked like a boy who was suffering. She always forgot herself when she saw people suffer.

“Oh, Miss Catherwood,” he said, moved by a sudden impulse, too, “my father is not dead! See!” he added, giving her the paper. She took it with some surprise. South Fifth Avenue, at half-past four in the afternoon, was a queer place for an interchange of confidences

between people who were almost strangers ! She soon forgot this, however.

“ My father was on a vessel from Cuba ; he was washed overboard and had his legs broken ; and he was left in Santa Rosa, sick——”

“ Santa Rosa,” interrupted Joe, who had been listening. “ The guava jelly here came from a friend who lives in Santa Rosa, and who calls his barque Santa Rosa.” In spite of his odd accent, Miss Catherwood understood him. She had read Mr. Thorn’s poor little note, and heard Joe’s words, and with the quickness of a kindly woman, she put them together before Jasper had time to guess what either she or Joe meant.

“ Is this Santa Rosa ship still at the wharf ? ”

“ Altro ? Why not ? ” asked Joe, in surprise. “ But the sailors are stupid. Even the capitano, my friend, cannot speak-a the English. They all grunt in the language of Spain.”

“ Come,” said Miss Catherwood to Joe, “ get into the carriage. Jasper Thorn, sit by me ! Drive to the docks, Jackson,—this man will tell you where later ! ”

“ Now, Jasper,” said Miss Catherwood ; “ we

will try whether this man from Santa Rosa knows of your father. All this is providential ! Our Italian friend here may be mistaken, but it will do no harm to find out. At any rate, we can make inquiries about the Hyperion at the docks."

Jasper had sense enough to keep silent ; he did not quite understand, but he knew how to obey.

"Do you know anything more of the Santa Rosa ?" asked Miss Catherwood, of Joe, who was grinning from ear to ear, and wishing that all his friends could see him in such company.

"Oh, yes," answered Joe, "there is a sick man on board,—a man who has the fever,—the fever, bad——"

Miss Catherwood's face brightened.

"It might be," she thought. "What is his name ?" she asked.

"I know not," said Joe. "He is a young-a man, I think."

"What a pity it is," she said, "that none of us speak Spanish."

"I speak it a little," said Jasper, who had been silent ; the world had suddenly changed

for him. He could only wait, hardly daring to hope.

Jackson, following Joe's direction, easily found the particular dock at which the barque Santa Rosa was moored. Miss Catherwood drew her silk skirts around her and wondered if her big sleeves would allow her to pass between the great piles of barrels and boxes on the wharf. She accomplished the task after some maneuvers, and the captain of the Santa Rosa came down the gang-plank whistling, in response to a similar whistle from Joe.

Jasper caught hold of Joe's arm. What joy or sorrow might not this young, smiling Spaniard give him !

"Speak to him !" Miss Catherwood whispered, almost as excited as Jasper. "Speak !"

Jasper's throat became dry, and he could hardly find words.

"Ask him, first, if he has a sick man on board," she said.

Jasper falteringly put the question in Spanish.

"Ah, yes," he answered, "I hope you're friends of his. He cannot speak ; he will die ; he has been without sense since I took him

aboard, and, I am sorry, but the sailor who brought him to Santa Rosa went off with his letters, and I do not know his name. But he will die !”

“ May I see him ? ”

“ Certainly,—you are perhaps friends of his, and all friends of Señor Tagliapietro are friends of mine. The ship is at your service,—especially at the service of the lady ! ” he added with a low bow.

How they got down into the cabin, Jasper never knew. Afterwards he only remembered that he saw the beloved face, flushed and thin, under the dim light of the port-hole. Then he cried,—

“ Oh, father !—father ! ”

The wan eyelids that seemed to have shut forever opened suddenly.

“ Jasper ! Jasper ! ” said the voice the boy loved to the utmost core of his heart. “ Now God will let me live ! ”

Miss Catherwood leaned against the doorway and began to sob with all her might. And Joe put his hands to his eyes and cried as if he were the little baby of which Jasper had taken such good care.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN Mr. Thorn was brought home there was the most intense excitement in Bleecker Street. Everybody within several blocks around was interested in the Thorns. Mrs. Thorn had become a great favorite with the neighbors, for she had let no opportunity of helping them pass,—and she had not asked even gratitude in return. When they thanked her she had answered gently :

“Why, it is I that ought to thank you for the chance of doing a good work !”

Her kindness to the McGonigles had become known, and, when Celia’s father had begun to go to church again, everybody knew who had brought it about. If she had boasted of her past riches or made comparisons between her past and present, her neighbor would not have been pleased. But, like all women who pray much,

Mrs. Thorn showed the influence of deep meditation in her every-day life.

And when Mr. Thorn lay in the rooms upstairs, between life and death, Mrs. Thorn's kindness came back to her, like bread cast on the waters, after many days.

The first joyful surprise of her husband's coming had been changed to suspense when she found how ill he was. She could only thank God over and over again for his great goodness. Father Freitag came, and he, who knew as much of the medical science as most doctors, declared that only the shock of seeing Jasper had awakened Mr. Thorn from the stupid condition into which fever had brought him. He told Mrs. Thorn that she might hope, and the physician said the same thing, but nothing more.

The McGonigles brought loads of sawdust and refuse from the tan-yards and spread them in front of the house, to dull the sound of wheels. Poor Mrs. Patcher came every day to ask how Mr. Thorn was.

"I hope he'll get well, for the sake of Jasper," she said, "for if it wasn't for that boy,

my own poor Billy would have died without a priest."

Celia waited on Mrs. Thorn anxiously, and even Monkey Angliori ceased to yell in the corridors. The Chinese laundryman sent up some incense sticks and even came up from his den in the basement, to ask if he might be of use. Joe Tagliapietro brought his nicest oranges every day, and Smarty Gibbons came with a pitcher of cream, which his mother sent, on each morning. The man who kept the French restaurant next door cooked a beautiful dish of snails with his own hands. He said that they were very cooling in fever, and he hoped that Mrs. Thorn would ask for anything she needed. Even Miley Galligan, who lived with his mother round the corner, brought some crumpled flowers, because Jasper had aided him with his lessons at school.

All this kindness helped Mrs. Thorn to bear her burden of suspense. Miss Catherwood and her father were very sympathetic, and Mr. Herbert excused Jasper from going to the office.

Finally the crisis passed ; and when the early

clover began, about St. Patrick's day, to peep from sunny spots in Central Park, Mr. Thorn was out of danger. He was allowed to talk a little. Later, when the great vases of pansies were set out in front of the Hotel Brunswick, in honor of Easter, and gorgeous red tulips and splendid yellow narcissus bloomed in the windows, he was driven out by Mr. Catherwood into the country. He had already told his wife and Jasper the story of his accident. Tired and nervous, anxious about his Cuban investments, he had gone on the deck of the *Hyperion* on a stormy night. A sudden change of wind threw the barque on her beam-ends, and an equally sudden wave had thrown him overboard. Crushed against the bulwarks, both his legs had been broken. He was picked up by a fishing-boat and taken to Santa Rosa. A medal of St. Benedict and his scapular told the priest of the village that he was a Catholic ; there was nothing else about him by which he could be known ;—nearly all of his clothes having been torn off by the violence of the wind and the waves. When his broken legs had been set, he had written

the note to Jasper which Juan Valera had delivered. After this, fever had come on again ; and he had lingered so long, apparently wasting away, that the good priest had at last sent him to New York. Nobody in Santa Rosa believed that he would reach the city alive. He had, it seemed to him, closed his eyes for the last time when he opened them, to see Jasper bending over him.

Mr. Catherwood had looked into his business while he was ill. .

"The Cuban affairs are all right," he said. "You are now a richer man than I am, and that boy of yours may buy back Corsair if he wants him !"

Mr. Thorn was glad to hear this.

"I don't care so much about it now," he said, "I used to be anxious about money for the boy's sake. Now that I find that he can make an honest living by his brain and hands, I almost wish he were poor again. I hope wealth may not spoil him ; it is more dangerous than poverty."

"Jasper has in him the making of a *man*," said Mr. Catherwood, "and when you can say

that of a boy, it makes no difference whether he is rich or poor."

Mr. Thorn was so well that night,—it was the night of Easter Monday,—that he asked all the neighbors who had been kind, in to see him. Mrs. Thorn served coffee and cake and strawberry-ice and gave everybody a big bunch of lilies.

Celia McGonigle said that it was better than a wake, and the Chinaman grinned with delight. Monkey Angliori marred the pleasure of the evening by falling down the fire-escape ; but he did not hurt himself much.

A month later, the Thorns went back to their own house, and the Morans, including Ben, called, with hundreds of other people who had forgotten them. Corsair was bought and he seemed happy in his own stable again ; Juan Valera was found in a cheap Bowery lodging-house and put in charge of the stable. Jasper was allowed to give a hundred dollars to Joe Tagliapietro's baby and even more to the Cuban captain who had brought his father home.

As for Miss Catherwood, when she married

Mr. Herbert, Jasper sent her the largest bunch of stephanotis and white violets ever seen in New York.

Jasper went to school ; but every Saturday he goes with Matilda to see the McGonigles, who have been made comfortable on a farm far above the city ; and Celia is the happiest girl alive, because her father is so good and because Monkey cannot fall down fire-escapes !

“I will learn all I can,” Jasper said the other night, putting his right arm about his father’s neck, and his left arm about his mother’s, “but I am sure now that, if we were poor again, I could support you both !”

The three laughed happily ; they had just come from a visit to Father Freitag’s church, where they had received his thanks for the great golden tabernacle they had presented him in thanksgiving.

“Poverty is nothing,” said Mrs. Thorn, “though I feared it so much,—poverty is not to be feared, if love and trust in God sanctify it !”

“I will learn all I can,” said Jasper, as the clock struck ten o’clock, “I will learn all that

anybody can teach *me*, and then I will go to live among the poor and be of *them* and teach them and help them. A boy ought to be good when he has a good father and mother and love and kindness and everything he wants. But poor boys, like Billy Patcher!—they have a harder road to travel. *My* friends henceforth shall be poor boys, and I will try to show the Holy Child, who was once a poor boy, how I can work for Him. I think I'll go to bed now! — so good-night! — good-night! — good-night all! — and God bless you!”

His father and mother watched him, with tears of love in their eyes, as he went up the stairs. He smiled when he reached the turn in the stairs, and waved his hand,—

“Good-night!” he said again, “God bless you! God bless you all!”

THE END.



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